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## PREFACE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

At the outbreak of hostilities in Europe the author of this book was engaged as Professor of Philosophy at the Gregorian University in Rome. After seven years of teaching experience in this educational center, he was forced by threatening conditions in Italy to return to the United States. Here, since 1940, he has held the position of Professor of Philosophy at St. Louis University.

The strong demand that the substance of his teaching be rendered generally available has led to the publication of this text, dealing with the basic course in Thomistic Philosophy.

In a rightly balanced college curriculum such a course must necessarily find its place. Too often, however, because of a constricting fear to face what may have been deemed too difficult, the study of metaphysics has been neglected, and philosophy itself has ceased to be the cornerstone of education. Yet it is idle to assume that the mere history of thought can be accepted as any substitute for a metaphysical system.

Fortunately, such a delusion can hardly continue to be maintained.

Perhaps never, since its very beginning, has the Philosophy of St. Thomas aroused such enthusiasm as in our day, been crowned with such praises by the Apostolic See, and won such tokens of sincere recognition from secular scholars. As a thoroughly coherent and complete metaphysical system it must hold an unchallenged position in Catholic education. Instance only such champions as Thomistic Philosophy within the Church as Boyer, Gilson, Maréchal, Maritain, Rousselot, De la Taille, Brennan, Farrell, Sertillanges, and Phelan!

Not merely has this system served as a sound basis of human thought, and a rational support of super-rational Faith, but the application of its principles by master minds to the most varied of modern problems has led to new and brilliant developments. We need here but recall De la Taille on the Mass, Maréchal in the realm of criticism, and Adler on the movies.

The time has come when every evidence has been supplied the world that natural science alone cannot guide civilization aright. On the other hand, the false lights of deceptive modern philosophies have definitely led men into the destructive quicksands of such Godless ideologies as Marxism, Communism, Fascism, and Nazism—all related in their common errors. Unfortunately, similar or identical philosophical theories are even now sedulously taught in countless educational institutions in the United States and other English-speaking lands. Natural law, inalienable human rights, and the unchanging moralities based on nature and God are glibly flouted in the classrooms that should be sacred to truth. Our renewal of a right way of life, for nations and individuals, must therefore be dependent on a revival of thought that is based on sound methods of teaching and on the best wisdom of the past. So, and in no other way, can we hope to solve the world's problems.

To aid fundamentally in this work has been the incentive which prompted the timely publication of the present scientific text, intended to introduce the student to sound Thomistic principles and inspire him to meet successfully the problems of our age.

JOSEPH HUSSLEIN, S.J., PH.D.,  
*General Editor, Science and Culture Texts*

St. Louis University,  
April 12, 1943

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

This book is an introduction to Metaphysics. It proposes to lay the metaphysical foundation for right thinking. It is primarily intended to be a positive, not a negative, work. The emphasis is not so much upon answering difficulties or on expounding and refuting adversaries, as upon giving a clear, concise, and unified presentation of the metaphysics of St. Thomas. The author believes, and in this he is merely repeating the pedagogical principles of such an eminent educator as Father Charles Boyer, S.J., that over-insistence on the historical aspect and development of philosophical thought, as well as a thorough presentation of the different doctrines of dissenting philosophers, would only confuse beginners.

In the first year of their course, students are not prepared to weigh and to judge for themselves the respective values of the different philosophical systems. They must first come to the study of reality with an open and unbiased mind; they must see how Thomas approaches and solves the fundamental problems of philosophy. In this way the end-result for the students may be not only a knowledge of Thomistic Metaphysics but the ability to think for themselves in a correct objective manner. Only when they have established a foundation for the knowledge and appreciation of truth should the different errors be proposed to them and the various doctrines be explained at length. Whatever, then, in this volume is presented in the way of adverse doctrines is done briefly and with a view to determine more vividly, by contrast, the position of the Angelic Doctor.

Moreover, this book has a definite practical aim. In the course

of philosophy as established at St. Louis University, the first tract given is Metaphysics. This is a three-hour credit course. Consequently, a book was needed short and compact enough to give in that brief time a complete synthesis of Thomistic Metaphysics. Later, when the student is thoroughly grounded in Christian philosophy, a survey course is offered in which other philosophies are discussed, and historical questions formally stressed.

The major concern of the author, therefore, has been unity, clarity, and brevity. Much that might prove interesting, and even to some degree useful, has been left out to make way for the necessary. For example, lengthy quotations from philosophers who differ from St. Thomas have not been included, and modern American authors whose thought is admittedly indefinite (even to themselves) have been omitted; to quote these at this early stage would only confuse the issue.

Moreover, few concrete examples have been offered. The reason is obvious. This is a textbook, and as such is meant to be explained by a teacher who can easily furnish the needed illustrations; hence there is no real need for cluttering it up with them. Besides, in the field of pure metaphysical speculation we must avoid too great a dependence upon sensible images. We are warned to beware of the imagination which may easily lead us astray. We should in this regard follow St. Thomas who, while quite generous with concrete images when dealing with the philosophy of man and nature, uses them sparingly when discussing purely metaphysical problems, as is evidenced in his commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle. What concrete images could be offered to portray those realities which transcend all sensible experience, as for instance the mutual intrinsic causality of matter and form, the nature of an *ens quo*, the modes of participation, etc.? Indeed it is feared that the constant exposition and exemplification of metaphysical reality by means of material images may result, as it did in the past, not only in the destruction of all real philosophical teaching, but in the formation in the student's mind of another "Locke-

Hume" empiricism. It is time to do away with the fantastic idea that a man, be he an American, is not able to think abstractly unless a sensible image be not only the source but the term of his reflection. .

Of course this textbook supposes a teacher, and a teacher who has not only read Thomas at length but also acquired a profound understanding of the transcendental beauty of his thought.

Finally the reading of St. Thomas is to be expected as the result of this study. The student is to be introduced to the actual text of St. Thomas. Indeed any introductory course of Metaphysics which falls short of this purpose is a failure because it substitutes itself for the very source to which it was meant to lead the student.

Due acknowledgment should be made to the Reverend Edmund F. Burke, S.J., and the Reverend Charles A. Coller, S.J., for their kindness in helping me to translate a number of Latin texts, and for reading and correcting proof sheets.

H. R.





# THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

## INTRODUCTION

**Metaphysics Is Concerned With the Contemplation of Truth.** Man was made to know and to love Truth. Indeed, the search after Truth is a constant process beginning at childhood, when we seek the explanation of sensible, visible things, and continuing all through life in the various experiences of sense and in the intellectual contemplation of reality. Much of the knowledge thus obtained can be classified and organized into unified bodies which we call "science"; but each field of science has its own limitations, and at best can give us only a portion of truth. Now most men, even so-called educated men, are content to rest here without seeking further into the ultimate truths that are the foundations of the special sciences. The phenomenal progress of physical sciences in the past few centuries, has, in great measure, distracted men from intellectual inquiry into the basic principles of those sciences. But no sincere thinker who would view truth as a whole can rest content with taking ultimate truths for granted; he will demand a rational guarantee of their validity. It is in the science of Metaphysics that these ultimate truths are studied as far as the natural limitations of the human mind will permit.)

Aristotle was the first to make an orderly classification of science into "practical" and "speculative." Practical science aims primarily at giving us useful knowledge. Dialectics, for example, shows us how to use our mental faculties, and Ethics points out the right order of our conduct. Now, although moral philosophy surpasses all other sciences, if considered relatively to the end of man, and

although rational philosophy, or Logic, is a necessary condition for any advance in correct thinking, nevertheless, if considered absolutely, these sciences are dependent upon Metaphysics, because they suppose reality. Speculative philosophy, on the other hand, seeks no other end than the discovery and understanding of the order in the universe, the order of nature as it is called, as it exists independently of us. We can say, then, that the end of Metaphysics is the contemplation of Truth.

At the very beginning of any realistic philosophy, the question of our ability to attain truth must be faced and accepted. Can man know reality; does his knowledge correspond faithfully to the things that are; are the objects of his knowledge what he thinks they are? We answer this challenge in the affirmative. Man can know what the real is; man can and does attain to the great fundamental truths which govern his right thinking and his right living. To deny this fact or even to doubt it is to declare oneself a skeptic. It is to deny the possibility of philosophizing, of thinking, or of living.

**Principle of Intelligibility.** This fundamental principle can be simply expressed: *Being is intelligible*. This principle states that being, the real, is the object of the intellect, and therefore that the intellect can know being. It implies that the concept by which the mind knows must correspond to the reality which it knows. This truth is so obvious that it cannot be demonstrated, and so necessary that it cannot be denied without the shipwreck of all knowledge.

**Difficulty.** Nevertheless, in this initial affirmation that being is intelligible, a formidable difficulty looms large and seemingly endangers our brave hope of knowing the real. Our knowledge, it appears, is twofold: sensation and intellection. In sensation we are aware of coming in contact with the individual manifestations of beings: we experience individual colors, weights, sizes; or, rather we see a colored something, we touch a large mass, we feel a heavy body, we attain a sensible knowledge of this individual. On the other hand, our analysis of intellection reveals that the concept does

not present an individual but a universal nature—a nature which can be affirmed of every individual of a definite species of being. For instance, we do not know this man Peter, but the nature of man which can and must be predicated not only of Peter but of every man. These are the facts, and from these facts the difficulty is made clear. If that which I call my highest and most perfect knowledge is universal, while reality as seen through the senses is individual, it would seem that my concept is not true since it does not correspond with the real. The being which exists is individual; my concept is universal. Consequently, it would appear, that contrary to our original statement, being is not intelligible.

**Plato's Solution.** This enormous difficulty was faced squarely by two great minds of ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle. Plato began with the affirmation of the absolute truth of the concept. But since, as we have seen, the concept is universal, it must have for its object a universal reality in order to correspond with the real. Consequently we must conclude to a reality that is universal. Moreover, truth is immutable, whereas the things that surround us here are individuals, limited, contingent, and mutable. We must therefore deny that they are real, was Plato's conclusion. They can be nothing more than shadows, mere phantoms of the true realities which must be universal, infinite, and necessary. Where are these extraordinary entities? In a world above us, he argued, a supra-sensible world, the world of ideas where the soul before being cast into the prison of the body on this earth had free access and was able to acquire the universal ideas which it now recalls.<sup>1</sup>

"It seems that Plato strayed from the truth because having observed that all knowledge takes place through some kind of similitude, he thought that the form of the thing must of necessity be in the knower in the same manner as in the thing known. Then he observed that the form of the thing understood is in the intellect under the conditions of universality, immateriality, and immobility. . . . Wherefore he concluded that the things which we

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Phaedo*, 74, A ff.; *Republic*, VII, 523, C ff.; *Parmenides*, 131, E.

understand must have in themselves an existence under the same conditions of immateriality and immobility."<sup>2</sup>

**Aristotle's Solution: Abstraction.** Aristotle, on the contrary, began with the assertion that the limited contingent individuals which we experience in sensation are the realities. True, the concept is universal, but this universality is due to a peculiar psychological process called abstraction. Let us see what this means. These existing individuals are corporeal; they are in matter. Now matter which is the principle of individuation, that is to say, the fundamental reason why these beings are individuals, not only is not intelligible of itself, but prevents any individual from being actually understood as individual. It follows therefore that the essence of the individual must be made intelligible by being abstracted from its individuating matter. And this is exactly what takes place in the process of abstraction: the individuating matter is somehow left out, and the essence of the being is reached. The net result is that the essence which is known by the intellect is one which has been deprived of its individuation and limitation, and is therefore what we call a universal concept.

"It is proper to it (the human intellect) to know a form existing individually in corporeal matter, but not as existing in this individual matter. But to know what is in individual matter, not as existing in such matter, is to abstract the form from individual matter which is represented by the phantasms."<sup>3</sup>

In view of what has been said we are able to state in what precise sense the principle of intelligibility is to be taken. In itself every being is intelligible because of its capacity for existence. The human intellect, however, in its present dependence upon matter can reach the intelligibility of an individual being only by means of an abstraction which deprives it of individuating matter, so that what is cognized is the universal essence.

This mode of knowledge is common to all men, and is the founda-

<sup>2</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 84, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 85, 1.

tion for true science. For only by the knowledge of a universal essence can we conclude to a universal law. This natural abstraction is called by St. Thomas the first degree or mode of abstraction, and obtains largely in the experimental sciences.

The process of abstraction admits of various degrees according to the depth with which the mind penetrates into the data of experience. Because of the different degree of abstraction which each supposes, Aristotle divided speculative science into three classes: Physics, Mathematics, and Metaphysics.<sup>4</sup>

**Degrees of Abstraction.** The first degree of abstraction—the abstraction required for the physical sciences—relinquishes the particular and individuating notes, or, as St. Thomas expresses it, abstracts from the determined individual matter (*ab hac determinata materia*) of sensible objects, of sensible change, until the intellect confronts the general (universal) essence of these. From the knowledge of these essences the mind is able to grasp the laws which govern the physical, material world and are universally applicable to the objects of our sensible experience.

In the second degree of abstraction, the mind goes beyond these sensible changes and discovers a permanent element in all corporeal beings: *extension*, as it is often called, or, more appropriately, the element of quantity present in all bodies. To do so, the intellect must abstract not only from all individual and sensible qual-

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<sup>4</sup> The name "Metaphysics" was not used by Aristotle; it is generally ascribed to Andronicus of Rhodes (70 B.C.) who collected the works of Aristotle and placed this portion of the writings of the Philosopher after the books of Physics; hence the name of Metaphysics (*μετὰ τὰ φυσικά*) merely means "after the Physics." Aristotle himself had called it "Theology" because it reaches to the study of God; and "First Philosophy" because of its primary importance in explaining first principles and first causes of things. The science of "Metaphysics" was unfortunately mutilated by Christian von Wolff (1754) into distinct particular sciences which are designated by the curious titles of Ontology, Cosmology, Theodicy, etc. It will appear from a further discussion of the object of Metaphysics that philosophy, which is Wisdom, must be one, and that all philosophy worthy of the name must be Metaphysics. Consequently, while some division may prove helpful in the ordering of questions and problems, we should never lose sight of the strict unity of philosophy and of the complete interdependence of the so-called parts.

ities, but even from all sensible matter, as is clearly seen in the concept of a geometric triangle, or a geometric circle. Here only a form with its relation to intelligible matter is perceived; for whether the matter of such a circle be silver or gold is no longer considered. This abstract notion of quantity is the proper foundation for the science of mathematics.

The third and highest degree of abstraction reaches not only beyond the sensible qualities of change and of individual matter, not only beyond quantity and sensible matter as well, but even beyond intelligible matter to the ultimate reality that is common to all — namely, *being*. "We are in the world of being as such, of the transcendentals, of act and potency, of substance and accident, of intellect and will, all of them realities which can exist in immaterial as well as in material objects."<sup>5</sup>

Briefly, then, in the first degree we abstract from individual sensible matter and retain common sensible matter; in the second we abstract from common sensible and we keep intelligible matter; in the third we abstract from all matter.

**Material and Formal Object.** Every science has its material and formal object. *The material object is the thing itself which is considered*; and the study of this object will bring us to certain principles and conclusions. These will compose the body of that particular science. *The formal object is the manner in which the object presents itself*. Thus one and the same material object, a tombstone, for example, will, by reason of dissimilar formal objects, be viewed quite differently by a stonecutter, by an historian, and by a geologist. Metaphysics has as its material object whatever can be included under the notion of "being"; that is, the whole field of reality, whether possible or actual, abstract or concrete, material or immaterial, finite or infinite. So long as the thing is or can be, it is a proper study for Metaphysics. The formal object of Metaphysics is, from the nature of the abstraction which this science demands, the

<sup>5</sup> Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics*, p. 84.

On the three degrees of abstraction read: *S. Th.*, I, 85, 1, ad 1m. et 2m.; in *I Phys.*, lect. 1, Nos. 2, 3; Proemium in *Metaph.*

study of "being" as "being," *ens in quantum ens*; that is to say Metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular aspect of "being," but rather treats of what is common to all beings, such as the components of "being," its properties and attributes, its divisions, its causes.

**Absolute Value of Metaphysical Principles.** From this observation, it is evident that Metaphysics deals with the most abstract and most universal concepts. It enables us, therefore, to analyze and study the fundamental principles of reality and those primary truths on which the validity of all other sciences depends. Indeed, the principles of Metaphysics are of absolute value, and not alone in the order of existence, but in the order of intelligibility—the knowable. That is to say, these principles which flow from the consideration of "being" as "being" are true not only for my intellect, but for every intellect, in as much as every knowable object is subject to these principles, both in my knowing it and as it exists apart from my knowing it.

**Erroneous Trends.** The emphasis on the physical sciences attributed largely to Bacon, and the profound contempt of the men of the Renaissance for the culture of the Middle Ages and for the philosophy of Aquinas, led to a decline in the study of Metaphysics—a decline which has continued almost down to our own day. In the modern era two distinct schools are noticeable. In the one, sense knowledge has become paramount even to the denial that man has an intellect, or at least an intellect distinct from sense cognition. This doctrine, which ultimately must signify the destruction of all truth and which must lead logically to a complete skepticism, that is, the denial of all reality, is found fully developed by the English empirical school whose principal exponents are Hume, Locke, Mill, Spencer; by the narrow, positivist French school eloquently headed by Taine and Comte; and by the grossly materialistic German school under the influence of such men as Buchner, Feuerbach, etc.

On the other hand, the subjective and psychological tendencies



of Descartes, lacking as they did a foundation in true Metaphysics, led to the denial of objective reality as knowable, and ultimately to the denial of absolute truth. Some, such as Kant and all the conceptualists, although not denying objective reality, held that the intellect could reach only the laws of the thinking subject, and, consequently, could attain no objective knowledge of the speculative principles which insure the absolute value of the real. Others, especially the modern idealist school, whose master mind is Hegel, being more logical in their conclusions, rejected all reality beyond the thinking subject.<sup>6</sup>

**Doctrine of St. Thomas.** Between these two extremes of Empiricism and Subjectivism, the doctrine of St. Thomas retains the convictions and simplicity of common sense while it presents a subtle and profound analysis of reality. With the Angelic Doctor, we posit that from such a consideration of the real the intellect comes to understand the laws of the absolute and the universal principles of "being." For, although in man the object of knowledge is in itself individual, limited, and primarily material, yet, because of its power of abstraction, the mind is able to discover the perfection, the essence, the nature of these particular objects of sensible experience. And having obtained an intimate knowledge of that which is, the intellect can proceed by analyses and deductions, through the instrumentality of a series of judgments and reasoning, till it perceives with perfect certitude the absolute laws of being.

**Divisions of Metaphysics.** Clearly, then, Metaphysics, like all human knowledge, must begin with the experience of the senses. For the intellect, spiritual faculty though it be, is dependent somehow (extrinsically, as philosophers say) upon matter; it must rely primarily on matter for obtaining the data on which it can act, and then rise beyond these particular objects to universal and abstract

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<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that these basically divergent doctrines ultimately join hands in a more or less complete intellectual skepticism which dominates the thought of all these authors.

speculations. Now starting with sense experience, we discover that the fact common to all things we know is that they are many, changeable, and limited. This observation gives rise to our first problem: what is the explanation of this multiplicity, mutability, and limitation? The solution, the only solution, as we shall see, which gives a complete and satisfactory answer, is the theory of act and potency. The first section of this study sets forth an exposition of this theory together with its application to the real in the orders of existence, of essence, and of activity.

The second section deals with the same problem of the "one and the many" in its relation to thought. How can one and the same concept of "being" be applicable to all the diverse classes and individuals, and at the same time be predicated according to truth? Again, we shall find, the solution lies in the application of act and potency to the concept, thus making clear that the notion of "being" must be transcendent and analogous.

The third section treats of causes. In as much as in our analysis of composite and limited being no sufficient reason for its existence can be found in its essence, we shall discover that no finite being can be completely understood without its relation to certain extrinsic principles (causes) upon which it depends for its "to be."

The fourth section covers the properties of "being." In this section we shall find that those attributes common to all beings must be transcendentals, because, like being itself, they transcend every genus.

Finally, the last section studies substance and accidents (the predicamentals), whose distinction necessarily appears when we consider the various types of changes that take place in finite beings.

We may summarize these divisions of Metaphysics as follows:

1. The intrinsic principles of "being": Act and Potency.
2. The notion of "being": Analogy.
3. The extrinsic principles of "being": Causes.
4. The properties of "being": Transcendentals.
5. The various classes (genera) of "being": Predicamentals.



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## SECTION I

### ON ACT AND POTENCY

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#### PROLOGUE

Because of the fundamental importance of the theory of act and potency, we shall discuss it at length in two chapters. In the first, after stating the problem of all philosophy, the "one and the many" (*de uno et multiplici*), we shall deal with the general aspects of this theory. In the second chapter we shall apply this theory to the particular orders of multiplicity and change.

Three questions are studied in the first chapter: (1) whether *act* and *potency* must be said to encompass being; (2) whether the intrinsic reason for the limitation of act is potency; (3) whether the distinction between act and potency is real.

The second chapter is concerned with the application of the theory of act and potency to the solution of three problems: (1) the multiplicity of finite beings in the order of existence; (2) the multiplicity of beings in the order of essences, that is, how there can be many individuals of the same species; (3) the constant dynamism and change in beings which still retain their identity as individual substances.

#### CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM OF THE ONE AND THE MANY<sup>1</sup>

#### FIRST QUESTION: The Problem of Becoming — Whether Act and Potency Encompass Being

**The Problem.** The fundamental problem of metaphysics as well as of all philosophy is stated in the antinomy of "the one and the many": How can being be one and many? The Greeks, who were

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<sup>1</sup> Bibliography: St. Thomas, in V, VII, IX, XI, *Met.*; in III *Phys.*; Aristotle, *Physics and Metaphysics*; Arnou, *Metaphysica Generalis*, pp. 11-33; Mattiussi, *Le XXIV Tesi*, pp. 1-33; Garrigou-Lagrange, *God*, II, p. 548.

the first in the history of human thought to evolve a comprehensive theory of reality, that is, to attempt to know the "why" of things, were well aware of this problem, and according to the diverse solutions proposed, were able to evolve different systems of thought. The philosophical evolution of the Greeks is, on a smaller scale, experienced in the intellectual development of a child. As a child comes to the use of reason, he first attends to the wonders of the external world, and only afterward looks inward to himself, or ascends to higher things. So did the Greek philosophers begin their quest of reality with the world outside. They were, if we may use the word, the first Cosmologists, for their philosophy dealt with the world of matter.

Now, when by successive abstractions, the Greeks finally arrived at the consideration of all things under the note of "being,"<sup>2</sup> that is, when they understood that the first truth perceived by the mind about anything is that it is or can be, that it is being, they faced a problem which taxed their ingenuity and called for their keenest philosophical acumen. This was the celebrated antinomy of the "one and the many."

What was the difficulty which troubled them? Our senses, they said, tell us that there are many beings. We see them, we hear them, we touch them; when, however, with our intellect we endeavor to analyze the concept of "being," it appears that "being" is one—unique. For what is being? It is that which actually is or can be. Is not such a notion always identical? It would seem so. All things are certainly alike in that they are "being." Still, if there are many beings, they must somehow differ one from another. To what could their differences be reduced if not to being? For these differences are not nothing; they are intelligible; they can be conceived. Obviously, it cannot be said that things differ by the very reason of their similarity. We must conclude, then, said these Greek philoso-

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<sup>2</sup> Parmenides of Elea seems to have been the first philosopher to have realized this most important fact that all things are intelligible and can be conceived in so far as they are "being."

phers, that if things do not admit of differences in the note itself of "being," they must differ in something other than "being." But whatever is other than "being" is non-being or nothing; and it is simply unthinkable that one thing should differ from another by nothing. Therefore, beings really do not differ among themselves; they are not many, but one.

Put in this abstract manner, the difficulty may at first sight seem unintelligible. As a matter of fact, the early Greek philosophers themselves did not propose the problem just that way, but attacked it from a point of view more easily realized. They began with a most common human experience, sensible or local motion.

We live in a world of change, of motion. This is the daily experience of all men as manifested to them by the senses. The sun rises and sets, inanimate objects are constantly being moved, living beings are born, grow, and die. There is, then, sensible motion of a sort; beings are somehow changing and becoming what they were not. It is undeniably clear that there is at least some local motion in this world of ours. But what is motion? What is change? How can a being become what it was not?

**Diverse Solutions Proposed.** To these questions the great Parmenides (about 540 B.C.), as Plato calls him, gave a very startling answer. There can be, he asserted, no such thing as change; there can be no becoming, no motion. Our senses would lead us into error, but our intellects clearly reveal the fallacy, the absurdity, the impossibility of any motion. Consider the concept of change. We say that in all change, in all motion, something new comes forth, something new is produced, something "becomes." Now certainly that something which "becomes" either already was or was not. It was either "being" or non-being (nothing). In the first supposition, if we admit change, we must say that that which becomes already was. Obviously this is absurd! Let us see, then, what happens if we elect the other supposition: that which becomes was not. It is evident that if what becomes was not being, it was nothing. It could not therefore become being, because out of nothing, as is clear,

comes nothing. Hence we are forced to the conclusion that motion is impossible.

Thus did Parmenides, and with him the *Eleatics*, endeavor to solve the paradox of being and becoming: change, motion, becoming is an illusion of the senses, an illusion which must be corrected by the intellect. What exists is solely being, the one, the immutable, the absolute.

In a quite different manner did Heraclitus of Ephesus (about 500 B.C.) propose a solution to this problem. According to him the only reality is not "being" but becoming (*πάντα ῥεῖ*). All things are in constant flow or flux. That which is really is not, since it is constantly changing, and nothing that *is* remains; not "being" but "becoming" is reality.

It is hardly necessary to state that neither of these theories is acceptable. Seemingly, one is diametrically opposed to the other; yet each is an implicit affirmation of pantheism, and each leads ultimately to some form of skepticism. To affirm the absolute unicity of "being," with Parmenides, or to make "becoming" the sole reality, with Heraclitus, is patently to reduce all to a single reality and, therefore, to embrace pantheism. That Parmenides' denial of the testimony of the senses, or Heraclitus' denial of the validity of the intellect (a denial by the way implicit in every philosophy of pure becoming) must result in skepticism is indeed obvious.

The true solution to this basically important problem was not indicated until Aristotle, clarifying and completing the doctrine of Plato, advanced the celebrated theory of act and potency. Centuries later, St. Thomas of Aquin fully developed this theory, and applied it not merely to the problem of local and sensible motion, as Aristotle had done, but to all mutations as well as to the limitation and multiplication of "being." A clear understanding of this solution and its development is indispensable to the study of philosophy.

**The True Solution — Aristotle.** How then did Aristotle solve the apparent contradiction in the concept of sensible and local motion?

Parmenides had said that that which becomes either was being or was non-being. To this assertion, Plato in his *Sophist*<sup>3</sup> suggests a distinction between "being" which exists and is determined and "being" which in a certain manner exists but is not determined. Such, for instance, would be matter which exists in a certain sense, since it is eternal, yet, in order to be determined, needs to participate in the "Ideas." This attempted explanation, although interesting and enlightening, is hardly tenable. Only by the doctrine of act and potency advanced by Aristotle<sup>4</sup> was the answer at length given to Parmenides' difficulty. That which becomes was neither being in act, nor was it non-being; it was being in potency. Nothing, it is true, can evolve or be educed from being in act, for it already *is* and cannot become what it is. An actual statue does not become the same statue; it *is* that. Nor can something come from non-being (unless we speak of creation which supposes an agent of infinite power). It is nevertheless possible for being in potency to become being in act. That statue, for example, does not come from the same statue, but from the marble, or from the wood, in so far as the wood or the marble was "in potency" to becoming a statue. To understand change, therefore, Aristotle postulates a medium between being in act (actual being) and nothing. This medium we call "being in potency," and sensible change which supposes sensible motion is the passage from potency to act. *Motion* according to Aristotle *is the act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency* — ἡ κίνησις ἐντελέχεια τοῦ κινήτου ἢ κινήτόν, or as the scholastics translate: *actus entis in potentia quatenus est in potentia*.

St. Thomas. Adopting this theory, St. Thomas carries it higher to the realm of pure metaphysics. No longer is it merely a question of the problem of sensible change and of local motion, but of mutation as such, which in every possible sense of the word *transcends* all finiteness, all limitation, all multiplicity, all becoming.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Sophist*, 241d, 257a, 259c; Garrigou-Lagrange, *God*, II, p. 549. In Plato's thought, matter was really non-being, since the Idea alone was being. Nevertheless, matter must in some manner exist, since it is the subject of participation of the Ideas.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Physics*, Bk. I, c. 8; *Metaphysics*, Bk. IV, Bk. IX.



By doing so, the Angelic Doctor furnished us with a solution to the problem of "the one and the many" in its absolute sense—in the world of existence no less than in the world of natures and ideas. The importance of his contribution cannot be overestimated; for, as might be expected, the erroneous solutions offered by Parmenides and Heraclitus have borne fruit, reappearing in such manifold hybrids as the static pantheism of Spinoza, or in the intellectual dynamism of Bergson, or, worst of all, in the idealism of Hegel. Hegel asserted that motion is contradictory, yet real, and that this contradiction is the source of all change and of life itself.<sup>5</sup>

St. Thomas, on the contrary, tells us: *There is no contradiction in motion, for motion is explained by real potency.*<sup>6</sup> Let us see then, with St. Thomas' help, what motion is. To answer this question we must, first of all, note that motion is unintelligible unless we posit a moving subject, which being one thing becomes another. In every true motion something remains and something is changed. It is clear that such a subject did not possess this new perfection, this new determination before it received it, but had only a certain capacity to receive it. The subject was, somehow, ordered or related to this new determination. In other words, it did not have it actually but rather *potentially*. It possessed something which gave it a tendency for something definite. This capacity or tendency we call a potential principle, or *passive potency*. "No subject can be changed, modified, or affected in any way, unless it has within itself some principle which can receive the new modification."<sup>7</sup>

This passive potency is not motion, but makes motion or change possible. We have remarked that motion can be defined as a passing, a transition from potency to act; or, to use Aristotle's phrase, it is the act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency. Evidently this act cannot be a perfect act (*actus perfectus*), for the perfect act is the term of the change and not the motion itself. Hence motion

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, p. 1, Bk. 2.

<sup>6</sup> "*Non oportet quod contradictio verificetur de eodem, quia secundum hoc nihil moveretur.*" In XI Met., ed. Cathala, lect. 6, No. 2234.

<sup>7</sup> In V Met., lect. 14, No. 963.

must be an imperfect act. "For if it were a perfect act, it would take away all the potency."<sup>8</sup> "Motion must of necessity be an imperfect act."<sup>9</sup> By means of this imperfect act the subject *is realizing or possessing* a perfection not yet fully possessed. It is being actuated to a perfection to which it was ordered. Motion terminates in the complete and perfect act to which the potency was ordered.

It must be noted [explains St. Thomas] that one thing is only in act, another only in potency, another, however, in a state midway between act and potency. That which is only in potency is not yet in motion, neither is that in motion which is in perfect act, but has finished its motion. Hence, that is in motion which is in a state midway between pure potency and act, it is indeed partly in potency and partly in act, as is evident in alteration. For instance, water which is only potentially hot is not yet in motion (or in a state of change): *nondum movetur*. When it is already hot, the motion of heating is finished. When, however, it is somewhat heated though not completely, then it is in motion to hotness, for by the fact of its becoming hot, it participates by degrees more and more of heat. The imperfect act of heat, then, in a subject capable of being heated is motion: not by reason of that which it already is in act, but by reason of the fact that while already existing in act it is ordered to a further act. For if this ordering to the further act were taken away, the act itself, no matter how imperfect, would be the end of the motion and not motion. This happens, for instance, when a thing is half heated. An ordering or tendency to an act belongs to a thing existing with a potency to that act. Likewise if the imperfect act be considered only in the light of its tendency to a further act, that is, only in so far as it is in potency, it is not in motion but only the source (*habet rationem principii motus*) of motion. For heating can begin whether a thing be cold or tepid. Hence an imperfect act is said to be motion both by reason of its being referred to a further act as a potency, and to something less perfect than itself as an act. Hence it is neither the potency of a being in potency nor the act of a thing existing in act, but is the act of a being in potency. That is, its being called "act" designates its relation to a

<sup>8</sup> *In XI Met.*, lect. 9, No. 2305.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, "*Oportet quod motus sit actus imperfectus.*"

previous (anterior) potency, and its being "of a being in potency" points out its determination to a further act. Hence the Philosopher most aptly defines motion when he says it is an entelechy, an act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency.<sup>10</sup>

"When there is motion . . . necessarily that which moves must be something; and, besides, it is necessary that that which moves, should move from one thing to something else. Wherefore, that which is moved must still be in that from which it moves and must not yet be in that to which it moves; but by a continuous change and modification it will be drawn to its new form." In other words, a changeable being is in potency to its new form but does not exist with that new form in act before the change is completed. "And thus, there seems to be involved an affirmation which is true to a certain extent, and a negation which is also true; but these two must not be considered as contradictory in this problem, for if they were, motion would be impossible. If the changing being should exist in its new form (in its final state 'the end to which,' *in termino ad quem*), and yet not possess it, there would be no reason why it should move to this new form, which it does not yet possess, since it would already be there."<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, then, there is no contradiction in motion. It is not, as Parmenides asserted, being and non-being at the same time and under the same aspect; it is not absolute determination and absolute indetermination. Rather it *is* and it *is not under different aspects*; it is both determined and not determined, but not in the same absolute sense. This is so because of the principles of "being," act, and potency, which must constitute every changeable being and make it capable of becoming something else.

This is the solution which the Angelic Doctor proposes to Parmenides' dilemma and the denial of the possibility of motion.<sup>12</sup> The new being which is had by change, by becoming, does not proceed from nothing, nor from being in so far as it is in act, but from a

<sup>10</sup> *In III Phys.*, lect. 2. <sup>11</sup> *In XI Met.*, lect. 6, No. 2234. <sup>12</sup> *In I Phys.*, lect. 14.

being that is a composite of act and potency, in so far as it is in potency.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that since motion, change, becoming cannot be explained without passive potency:

1. *All beings subject to change must be composed (made up) of act and potency.* "In everything which moves some composition is noted."<sup>13</sup> For a thing can change only in so far as it is in potency.

2. *A pure act is not subject to change for it has no potency, but is all perfection.* "Whatever motion is spoken of follows a potency. For every creature has some potency . . . since God<sup>13a</sup> alone is pure act, all creatures must needs be changeable, and only God be unchangeable."<sup>14</sup>

And we are now able to understand and answer affirmatively our first question: *Act and potency adequately encompass being, for whatever exists is either pure act or a composition of act and potency.*

Here it should be noted that when we say that act and potency encompass being, we do not mean that they themselves are being. This is true only in the case of pure act. Our meaning is that they are components or principles of being. Again, we do not say that every being must be composed of act and potency; what we maintain is that every mutable being, and consequently every limited or finite being is thus composed. Our assertion is: any existing or possible being is either pure act or a composite of act and potency; and this, indeed, is Thomas' meaning when he writes: "Potency and act divide every being and every genus of being."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> S. Th., I, 9, 1 c.: "*In omni eo quod movetur attenditur aliqua compositio.*" Cf. I, 9, 2.

<sup>13a</sup> There is no intention here of proving the existence of God. Our contention is that if He exists He must be a pure act.

<sup>14</sup> "*Motus quocumque dicatur, sequitur potentiam. Cum enim omnis creatura habeat aliquam potentiam . . . quia solus Deus est purus actus, oportet omnes creaturas mutabiles esse, et solum Deum immutabilem.*" In I Sent., dist. VIII, q. 3, a. 2.

<sup>15</sup> S. Th., I, 77, 1. "*Cum potentia et actus dividant omne ens et omne genus entis.*" "This thesis," says Mattiussi, "is not a useless subtlety, but a laborious preparation to the most accurate concept of the absolute, of the necessary, of the infinite that the human intellect can reach." (*Le XXIV Tesi*, c. 1.)

**SUMMARY**

We have now taken the first step toward a complete solution of the problem of the one and the many. By considering only its most obvious phase — the question of becoming, of change, of motion — we have shown that becoming is possible, change is intelligible, motion is not contradictory. In other words, we have shown that the same individual being can be one and many by reason of this becoming, because it is a being composed of act and potency. This fundamental metaphysical fact will be the basis for a complete solution of the multiplicity of beings, and for their mutual differences.

**SCHOLION**

We have previously remarked that in a composite being which is strictly one, act and potency are not beings, but rather principles of being. This remark calls for explanation.

A passive potency is, as we have already stated, a positive reality between absolute non-being and being in act.<sup>16</sup> In order to clarify our point we may consider the classic example of a statue made of wood. We say that this wood before the action of the sculptor was in potency to become a statue. Evidently this potency is not nothing but something real; else any being could be said to be in potency to becoming a statue. To say that this potency is merely the essence of the wood will not do, for that essence exists; it is in act. Nor will it help to say that it is the essence of wood in so far as it is not a statue, for that is a mere negation and a mere negation explains nothing. Every negation must be founded on an affirmation, on something positive. "Peter," says St. Thomas, "is not an ass, because he is a man"; so the wood is not yet a statue, not merely because it is wood, since it could be a statue and still remain wood, but because

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<sup>16</sup> This is contrary to the opinion of Suarez, the great Spanish theologian (1548-1617), who affirms that "being in potency" does not signify a state or a positive mode of being, but, besides a denomination from the power of the agent, merely includes a negation. (*Disp. Met.*, disp. XXXI, sect. 3.)

it is in potency to becoming such. Clearly, then, this potency must be something real, a positive reality that is a medium between non-being and being in act. We must conclude, therefore, that this potency is not a complete reality in itself but an incomplete one; not a being in the full sense of the word, but a principle of being.

Likewise, the act which actuates potency is also merely a principle of being. There is this great difference, however, between potency and act: potency is a limiting principle, and the root of multiplicity, whereas act specifies, perfects, actuates. These two principles complete each other and make this being, the resultant composite, what it is. They are so mutually dependent, so related to each other that there is a mutual exigency for each other; and this very exigency is the root and cause of all the activities of nature. We call this mutual need, this relationship by which act and potency are referred to each other by their very entity, a transcendental relation.

### COROLLARY

From the fact of this transcendental relationship of act and potency, we see at once that two beings in act cannot become one in act. That is to say, the composite result of two beings in act cannot be a perfect unit. "For," as Thomas insists, "two which are in act are never one in act . . . and this because act has the power of separating and dividing. For each thing is divided from another by its proper form. . . . Wherefore it is necessary that if a particular substance is one, it will not be from substances in act existing in it."<sup>17</sup>

### APPENDIX: Origin, Definition, Division of the Concepts of "Act" and "Potency"

**Origin of the Concepts.** We have explained how the concepts of act and potency originated from a consideration of objects in motion, and we have seen the significance of Thomas' remark that "motion is the act of a being in potency."<sup>18</sup> Water, for example,

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<sup>17</sup> *In VII Met.*, lect. 13, No. 1588.

<sup>18</sup> *In IX Met.*, lect. 1, No. 1770.

is heated and becomes warm. Here motion means the act which terminates in a new perfection which we call warmth. It is clear that this motion is only an imperfect act — the passing of potency to act, or, “the act of a being in potency inasmuch as it is in potency.”

**Description.** From this we are enabled to say abstractly that act is perfection, and potency is capacity for perfection. Act is a reality which perfects, actuates the potency in which it is received, but in no way destroys it. Potency, on the other hand, is not nothing but something positive, which is necessarily ordered to act. It is a positive capacity for receiving this perfection.

Act and potency cannot be defined in a strict sense; for, since potency is inconceivable except by relation to act, it must be declared by the act. We must indicate what the act is whenever we specify the capacity for the act. Act, therefore, is prior in the order of thought. In the real order, however, while we must admit that act does not precede potency in the same subject, we must also admit that, absolutely speaking, act is first, since “a potency cannot educe itself into act but must be actuated by something that is already in act.”<sup>19</sup>

**Division.** An act is called *pure act*, if it is an absolute perfection. In such an act there is no potentiality, no capacity for further perfection, no limitation. There is simply actual infinite perfection. God alone is pure act in the existential order. Such an act cannot, of course, receive another perfection since it possesses the fullness of all perfection. On the contrary, all other acts besides God must have some potentiality; they can receive new determinations, new perfections: they are not pure, but limited acts.

We should also distinguish between acts which are received (*actus receptus*)<sup>20</sup> in a potency as in a limiting subject, and acts

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<sup>19</sup> C.G., I, c. 16.

<sup>20</sup> By the expression *actus receptus*, St. Thomas does not mean to say that this act, this perfection, did exist, or could exist alone before being received in the potency, and in this state would be unlimited, that is infinite; then later being joined with the potency, it is, as it were, made to fit. Nothing could be more absurd. The word “*receptus*” indicates the manner of causality that is found in such an union of act and potency, namely that it is intrinsic.

which are not so received (*actus irreceptus*). The soul of man, for example, is a received act, since it can exist in matter, and is, therefore, received in the potency, matter. But the essence of an angel<sup>20a</sup> is an unreceived act—a pure act in the order of essence. Consequently there is no intrinsic principle limiting the angelic essence.

Several other important distinctions should be considered: (1) *Entitative act* is act in the order of being. It is the supreme actuation of reality, namely, existence, or, as the Angelic Doctor expresses it, the “to be.” It is the first act of any being. (2) *Formal act* is act in the order of essences and specifies the nature. It is called the first formal act, or more frequently the substantial form. It is because of this formal act that a being can exist, since this act communicates existence or “to be” to the potency into which it is received. When, however, a formal act is received into an already existing subject it is called *second formal act*, or more commonly, accidental form. An accidental form causes a modification of the existing being, but does not destroy the first formal act. That is to say, after the reception of an accidental form, the being remains substantially what it was, although it may receive or lose other non-essential perfections. (3) Moreover, the first formal act, or substantial form, is called *subsisting form* if it can exist without matter. Such is the human soul. If, however, the substantial form cannot thus exist but is intrinsically dependent on matter, it is called *non-subsisting form*. Such is the principle of life in plants and beasts.

### The Principle of Potency Can Be Distinguished in Like Manner.

1. *Active potency*, which we have already classed as a principle of action (*principium agendi*), is a capacity for doing. Generally, however, when we speak of potency we refer to passive rather than to active potency; and passive potency, as we have indicated, is a principle which is acted upon—a determinable principle capable of receiving new forms. Active potency, on the contrary, is really act. Thus we say that God is *omnipotent*.

<sup>20a</sup> As was stated with regard to God, we do not here assert the existence of angels, but merely say that if they exist, they are pure acts in the essential order.



2. *Passive potency* is called *pure potency* when it does not contain any act or perfection. Hence, *prime matter*, which is denominated solely in relation to the particular form to which it is ordered, is called pure potency.<sup>21</sup>

3. Finally, *passive potency* is divided into *natural potency* and *supernatural*, or, as it is generally called, *potency of obedience*. By natural potency is meant that capacity which, being rooted in the very nature of a composite being, receives acts proportionate to that nature.

*Obediential potency* is the capacity which creatures possess to be elevated by God to acts or perfections beyond their natural power. As Thomas observes: "In any creature, passive potency can be considered under two aspects: one in relation to the natural agent; the other in relation to the Prime Mover who can bring any creature to a higher degree of perfection than can the natural agent; and under this aspect the potency is known to us as the potency of obedience of a creature."<sup>22</sup>

## SECOND QUESTION: Why Are Some Beings Limited and Therefore Multiplied, or Whether Act Is Limited by Potency

The problem of change and becoming is, as we have remarked, only an aspect of the fundamental question of the one and the many, and the first which naturally presents itself to the mind of a philosopher. In our endeavor to clarify and explain the nature, and consequently the possibility of change, we proposed the Aristotelico-

<sup>21</sup> Some scholastic writers distinguish further between objective and subjective potency. Objective or logical potency (that is, merely existing in the mind) is a mere possibility, and is not a distinct reality. While there can be no harm in calling a possible an objective potency, as long as we clearly understand what we mean, such a nomenclature is apt to cause confusion in the mind of a beginner. We think it wiser to call a possible, possible, and reserve the name potency for a capacity for perfection which is a reality outside of the mind. Such a capacity for perfection is called by these same writers subjective potency. (Cf. Mattiussi, *op. cit.*, p. 4.)

<sup>22</sup> *S. Th.*, III, 11, 1c.

Thomistic theory of act and potency; and we showed that while change or becoming did not involve a contradiction, it did presuppose in the changing subject a composition of act and potency. Bearing this in mind we are now prepared to attack the difficult problem of multiplicity: namely, how can there be more beings than the One, Immutable, Unlimited, or Infinite Being?

**Problem of Limitation.** We may begin by noting the fact that multiplicity by its very nature necessarily presupposes limitation of perfection. The unlimited or infinite cannot be multiplied, for, as is obvious, "two infinities" having entirely the same perfection would be distinguished from each other by nothing, and therefore would be one. Hence, in dealing with the question of multiplicity we shall find it more advantageous and more logical to determine merely the ultimate reason for this limitation.

Now, it is an immediate deduction, verified by constant experience, that the beings with which we come in contact, because they are many, must be limited. They do not possess the fullness of the perfections in which they participate; they are not infinite. What is more — and this is a manifest sign of their limitation — they can acquire new perfections, they can become what they are not. In brief, although any being of this kind is in act, and, consequently, is a perfection in so far as it *is*, still it is only a limited perfection in so far as it is multiple, finite, and capable of receiving accidental perfections. Look at Johnny; he is a man, but he is not humanity; he is good, but he is not goodness itself; he is white, but not whiteness. Moreover, while he is far more perfect than a stone, a plant, or a mere beast of the fields, he is far less perfect than a purely immaterial intellect. Assuredly, Johnny is act; but he is not pure act; he is perfection, but he does not contain infinite, limitless perfections. Johnny is a finite creature, a limited being. Our present task is to determine the reason for this finiteness, and limitation.

Here let us note — and this should always be kept in mind — that the object of philosophy, "being," is in the third degree of abstraction; and, consequently, that any real philosophical solution cannot

be had by a study of sensible experience, whether internal or external. Philosophy is not an experimental science, nor does it go to the experimental sciences for a solution to its problems.<sup>23</sup> Certainly any proof that brings with it metaphysical or absolute certitude, must ultimately be an analysis not of a particular manifestation of a particular thing, but of reality—an analysis of nature. Since, however, we reach our knowledge of natures by means of concepts, it follows that a metaphysical problem can be solved only by an analysis of the concept. The solution, therefore, of the problem of the limitation of act will be found in an analysis of the concept of act and potency—in the study of their transcendental relation.

**Three Solutions.** For this reason our present problem must be stated in this way: what is the ultimate reason for the limitation, the finiteness of a given perfection or being. Three solutions have been offered: (1) an efficient cause of sufficient power curtails the perfection; (2) the act is its own sufficient reason for limitation; (3) a potential co-principle of being effects the limitation.<sup>23a</sup>

**Can the Efficient Cause Limit a Perfection?** In the first place, that such a limited perfection (in order to exist) must be efficiently caused and, if need be, created, and that as a consequence an external agent must be postulated, we are ready to grant. But limitation of a created or a finite being effected by an extrinsic principle in the order of efficient causality is not the question we are now considering. Rather, our problem is one of intrinsic limitation; and the question to be answered is: whether the nature

<sup>23</sup> The experimental sciences seek to find, define, and correlate the manifestations, in the order of activity, of particular things, and classes of things. They do not go directly to the essences of things, although the data they provide are a *sine qua non* for intellectual penetration into the heart of reality.

<sup>23a</sup> Why are only three solutions mentioned? The answer is simply that these three are the only possible means of explaining limitation. In other words, there are only three thinkable ways in which a being could be supposed to be limited. Such a limitation must come either from within or from without. If from without, we should have to call this extrinsic limiter an efficient cause. If from within, there are only two possibilities. Either the perfection of the being which we call act is the limiting factor, or some other principle which is not the act. But the only other intrinsic principle besides act is potency.

of a limited act or perfection requires as a determining constituent, a limiting principle which we call potency. To say, for instance, that I limit a loaf of bread by cutting it in two, and that I, the cause of that limitation of the bread, am in no way a constituent element of the bread, but an external agent, is to fail completely to understand the meaning of the problem of intrinsic limitation. Truly enough, I cut, I divide, and therefore limit the bread; but I am able to do so only because the bread is limitable—because of the capacity that the bread has for being cut. This capacity is not in me; it is due to the fact that there is a principle in the bread which we call matter<sup>24</sup>—a principle because of which the bread has definite extension. If the bread were pure form, no external agent, no matter how powerful, could cut or limit it, for it would have no extended parts. It is clear, therefore, that intrinsic limitation cannot be solved by assuming an adequate efficient cause. To say this would be to confound two orders of being.

Another example may help to clarify the meaning of our problem. In my analysis of the concept “man,” I see clearly that such a concept denotes “rational animal.” This true definition of man postulates a composite nature whose components are matter (body) and a spiritual form (soul). Moreover, so absolute is our certitude that such a composition is required for the nature of man, that we are able to affirm without any doubt that no efficient cause of any kind, not even an infinitely powerful God, could produce a creature possessing the nature of man, which would not be a rational animal, and which would not be composed of body and soul. We see, at once, that such a nature—the nature *man* that would not be rational animal—is not nature at all. It is non-being, and hence nothing. It states that man is not-man. It is a denial of the principle of contradiction, and of this our intellect, which is ordered to truth, is aware, not because of any experience, or be-

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<sup>24</sup> We speak here, of course, of matter as under the form of corporeity and quantified. Matter in itself is not divisible. This will be treated at some length when we discuss the principle of individuation.

cause of any data had from the natural sciences, but because our intellect knows the truth and sees the utter impossibility of such a being.

To maintain therefore, that an efficient cause in its formal sense (God, for example) is the ultimate reason for the intrinsic determination of an essence and for the limitation of an act, is to affirm that God can do the impossible. Wherefore we are forced to the conclusion that *whenever the idea or essence of a certain nature requires certain essential constituents, no efficient cause — not even God Himself — could produce such a being without these constituents*. Such a procedure would amount to the production of a non-being or nothing, and hence can have no meaning.

**Can an Act Limit Itself?** The second solution, offered by some scholastic authors, is that the act itself is its own sufficient reason for limitation. Such an hypothesis, however, is entirely unintelligible, and, consequently cannot be true.<sup>25</sup> Let us see why.

It is clear, in the first place, that the limitation of an act is something pertaining to the essence of the being which happens to be limited, and not to the essence of the act as such. The concept of act is a concept of perfection; limitation, on the contrary, is precisely the negation of perfection. This being so, to state that the same thing is a perfection and a denial of that perfection is to affirm and deny the same thing of the same object. Besides, the *concept of act neither includes nor excludes limitation*. If it should include the note of limitation, then act by its very essence would be limited, and so all acts would necessarily have to be limited. In consequence, an infinite God or Pure Act would be an impossibility. If, on the other hand, the concept of act should exclude the note of limitation, no finite being would be conceivable, let alone exist. Finally, to call this note of limitation a mere nega-

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<sup>25</sup> When we say that this is unintelligible, that it has no meaning, we do not merely affirm that we cannot grasp it because of the weakness of the human intellect and the profundity of the question, but rather that in itself, and from an analysis of the concept of its nature, we find that it is a non-being. Since being alone is intelligible, non-being cannot be the object of any intellect.

tion is not to give a sufficient answer to the problem; for every negation, as we have previously shown, supposes something real, something positive. To say that Peter is not an ass, is to affirm that he is not an ass because he is something else, namely, a man. In like manner, to say of a being that it is not unlimited act—not simply act without limitation—is to affirm that there is a certain essential constituent in that being by reason of which it is not unqualifiedly act; there is in it a capacity, a potential principle which by limiting that being intrinsically, prevents it from being a perfection without limits.

**The Proof.** For the sake of clarity we may put this briefly and in a more exact form: Whatever is not contained in the adequate concept of a certain being, or nature, or principle, cannot be called a part of that being, or nature, or principle, but must be outside it, distinct from it, and not derived from it.<sup>26</sup> But the concept of limitation is not contained in the adequate concept of act. Therefore, limitation of act in a limited being is not from the act itself. Yet it is the essence of a limited being to be limited. The limitation, therefore, must result from the presence of another essential intrinsic principle, a potential principle, a capacity which limits the act by being actuated by it. This is what we mean by saying that act is limited by potency.

**Summary.** By way of summary, then, we can say that our present study has brought us to the following conclusions: (1) multiplicity postulates limitation; (2) every finite being must have an intrinsic reason for the limitation of its perfection; (3) since this limitation cannot be explained as coming from the act, there

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<sup>26</sup> The theory of distinction of natures whose concepts are adequately distinct will be treated in full in the next question. It suffices now to indicate briefly: (1) That an adequate concept is essentially identical with a given reality, so that it must be directly predicated of it (*praedicatur in recto*). The concept of the soul, for example, cannot be said to be an adequate concept of man. (2) It must be asserted as absolutely true that whenever concepts of natures, of beings, of principles are adequately distinct, whenever such concepts cannot be predicated of, but exclude each other, one nature cannot be said to be identical with the other, but must be somehow distinct.

must be in such a being a potential constituent limiting the act.

**Doctrine of St. Thomas.** St. Thomas expounds this fundamental doctrine in many texts. For him it seems to have been an immediate deduction from the principle of contradiction, and so evident to his mind that he serenely states the principle of limitation of act by potency time and time again without ever attempting a formal demonstration of it. "An act existing in nothing is limited by nothing."<sup>27</sup> "No act can be found to be limited except by a corresponding potency. . . . For we find that forms are limited according to the potency of matter. If therefore the First Mover is act without any composition with potency, it is necessarily infinite."<sup>28</sup> The deduction is immediate and necessary. If there is a being with no potential or limiting principle, that being is pure act; and in the order in which it is said to be pure act, it is necessarily infinite. All other beings, possessing only limited perfection, must be a composition of act and potency. We can, then, enunciate the fundamental principle of the philosophy of St. Thomas as follows:

*An act, because it signifies perfection, can be limited (intrinsically) only by potency, which is a capacity for perfection. Consequently, in any order in which an act is pure, it must be unlimited and unique. But whenever an act is found to be limited and multiplied, it is united with potency to make one composite being.*<sup>29</sup>

Three fundamental truths, it will be observed, have been demonstrated in the solution of this problem:

<sup>27</sup> "Actus in nullo existens, nullo terminatur." C.G., I, c. 43.

<sup>28</sup> The original text reads: "Nullus enim actus invenitur finire nisi per potentiam quae est eius receptiva. Invenimus enim formas limitari secundum potentiam materiae. Si igitur primum movens est actus absque potentiae permixtione, necessarium est ipsum infinitum esse." *Compend. Theol.*, c. 18. (Cf. also: *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 5; *S. Th.*, I, 77, 3; II, C.G., c. 52; *De Spir. Creat.*, a. 1, etc.)

<sup>29</sup> This is the second of the twenty-four theses proposed by the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries, as a safe norm for the true doctrine of St. Thomas. The original actually reads: "Actus, utpote perfectio, non limitatur nisi per potentiam, quae est capacitas perfectionis. Proinde in quo ordine actus est purus, in eodem nonnisi illimitatus et unicus existit; ubi vero est finitus et multiplex, in veram incidit cum potentia compositionem."

1. Every finite, limited perfection requires an intrinsic potential principle, which limits it and to which the act is proportioned.<sup>30</sup>

2. Consequently, by way of immediate deduction, an act existing without a limiting potency must be infinite in its own order, and necessarily unique in that order.<sup>31</sup>

3. Wherever beings are found to be many and limited, they must be composed of two principles: one we call the actual, the other the potential and limiting principle.

It is interesting to note that this last statement parallels our conclusion to the first problem. There, as we explained, change or becoming necessitates intrinsic composition of act and potency; here, we have shown that multiplication, because it supposes limitation, requires the same composition of act and potency.

**Limitation of Potency.** One question may, however, seem to remain unanswered: What about the limitation of potency itself? In one sense it must be said that potency is limited or determined of itself; in another, that act determines and limits potency. But it should be clear that in each instance the word "limits" has a different meaning. When we say that potency is determined of itself, we mean that any capacity for perfection is determined simply because it is a *definite capacity* for definite act. Thus the capacity to become warm is not the same as the capacity to become a statue. St. Thomas is very precise on this point: "Since a potency is that which is spoken of with reference to its act," he writes, "it is necessary that potency be distinguished according to that to which it is said to be in potency."<sup>32</sup> Potency, in itself, being a capacity for such a perfection, is limited in itself and needs no

<sup>30</sup> Every potency is a definite capacity, e.g., the capacity of water for heat is definite. The act (heat) to be received in water must be proportioned to its capacity.

<sup>31</sup> A pure act cannot be multiplied in its own order. Consequently an angelic essence—a form which is not received and limited in matter—is infinite in the order of essences (St. Thomas says: *infinitum secundum quid*); it possesses the plenitude of that particular specific perfection, and so there can be only one individual in each angelic species: *Quot angeli, tot species*.

<sup>32</sup> *De Subst. Separ.*, c. 5.



other principle of limitation. And again: "For since potency means a relation to act, there must be a diversity of potencies according as there are a diversity of acts."<sup>83</sup> Potency is diversified, and consequently limited because of its capacity, its relation, its exigency for a definite act.

The limitation of potency by act is, of course, quite different. It is the act which specifies and actuates. Consequently, the potency which has been actuated by this specific act is limited and determined in the sense that, since it has received this act, it is no longer in potency to it, although it may be in potency to many other acts.

Briefly then: act limits potency by actuating and specifying it; potency limits act by receiving it as in a subject, and participating of the perfection according to its capacity.

**Opinions.** Since this thesis is the master key of Thomistic philosophy, it is naturally rejected by those philosophers who do not strictly follow St. Thomas. In the first place, all those who do not admit plurality or multiplicity (Monists, Pantheists, Phenomenalists), do not even consider the possibility of such a solution, for they do in no way recognize the problem of multiplicity.

Scotus<sup>84</sup> and after him Suarez<sup>85</sup> taught that there is no need of postulating a potential and limiting principle. The act, they say, is limited in itself by the mere causality of an efficient cause. Thus in the case of angelic natures where no potency of matter is found limiting the act of the essence, there is no reason why God could not limit and multiply such an essence, so as to create many angels of the same species.

From what has been said, however, it is clear that these philosophers have not properly stated the problem of limitation. It is not a question, as we have pointed out, of an efficient agent capable of doing what is intrinsically possible, but of the intrinsic possibility

<sup>83</sup> "Cum enim potentia dicatur ad actum, oportet quod secundum diversitatem actuum sit diversitas potentiarum." (S. Th., I, 54, 3, c.)

<sup>84</sup> *Reportata Paris.*, Id. 2, q. 3, n. 2.

<sup>85</sup> *Disp. Met.*, disp. 31.

itself of the essence of a limited being. Our consideration is whether by the analysis of the concept of such a limited essence, we are able to ascertain its simplicity or its compositeness of two principles, the one a perfection or act, the other a limitation of that perfection.

The doctrine we have proposed is frequently found in Plato, although in embryonic and somewhat ambiguous form;<sup>36</sup> Aristotle propounds it in his theory of pure act. The Neoplatonists use it constantly, and St. Augustine mentions it as a foundation for his philosophical theories, e.g., *De Trinitate*, VIII, c. 3, No. 5; *De Civitate Dei*, XI, c. 9, 10, etc.

### SCHOLION

In exposing the consequences of his theory of limitation of act and potency, St. Thomas often uses terms which must be properly understood. We have already said something of the word "received." Another expression frequently encountered in the discussion of this doctrine is the term "to participate." A participated perfection is necessarily limited because it is shared in according to the capacity or potency of the participating subject.<sup>37</sup> It is clear that the word "participated" indicates that such a perfection, limited as it is by being received in a potency, implies an unparticipated, unreceived, and, consequently, infinite perfection which is both the exemplary idea and the supreme efficient cause of the participated perfection. The following text adroitly sums up this doctrine: "That which is in another is in it according to the measure of the recipient. An act, then, that exists in nothing (no recipient) is limited by nothing."<sup>38</sup>

### THIRD QUESTION: Whether the Distinction Between Act and Potency Is Real

**The Reason for the Problem.** After seeing that the multiplication

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Phaedo*, XLIX, 100; *Banquet*, XXIX, 210, 211.

<sup>37</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 75, 5, ad 4m. "*esse participatum finitur ad capacitatem participantis.*"

<sup>38</sup> "*Quod in altero est, est in eo per modum recipientis. Actus igitur in nullo existens nullo terminatur.*" *C.G.*, I, c. 43.

of beings is understandable only because such beings possess limited perfection, and that this limited perfection demands an intrinsic composition of act and potency in those beings, we readily gather that there must be some kind of distinction between the principles of act and potency themselves. But what is the nature of this distinction? To gain a more profound knowledge of being, we must now set ourselves to the task of solving this problem.

Here for the sake of precision, let us recall that these principles, although realities, are not being in the full sense, but are merely constituents of being. Their relation to each other is, therefore, transcendental, and, as a rule, one does not exist without the other.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, their union in which the act depends upon the potency for its limitation, and the potency upon the act for its actuation or "to be," is so intimate and so perfect that, when act and potency are in the order of substance, the resulting composite being is a perfect unit.

From these observations, it would seem that the distinction between them must be quite independent of our minds, and, consequently, real. Still this distinction is not exactly of the same kind as that found between two complete beings enjoying separate existence — between Peter and Paul, for instance. Two such complete beings are entirely independent of each other and are not transcendently related. In treating of the distinction between potency and act, therefore, we are not dealing with a distinction between two complete beings, but with a distinction between two principles by whose union limited being *is*.

Any serious attempt at philosophizing, any profound endeavor to analyze truth supposes some theory of distinction. For, since we

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<sup>39</sup> A notable exception to this is the soul of man which can exist after death separated from the body, although retaining its relation, its need for the body. This possibility of the continued existence of an act without its limiting potency is explained because the soul of man, though it be the form of a material potency, that is, the body, is nevertheless a spiritual form, that is, its existence transcends the material order, and consequently the soul is independent of the body in its "to be."

deal with realities which transcend sensible experience, at least in their ultimate analysis, we must—in order to understand what they are—find out whether they are identical or distinct. Indeed, unless we have a clear notion of identity, distinction, and the criterion of truth necessary for the knowledge of such realities we cannot begin to discuss the problem of being.

**The Meaning of the Problem.** No great philosophical acumen is needed to determine the nature of the distinction between two complete beings which exist separately, such as Peter and Paul. For the experience of the senses concurs with the judgment in affirming that such beings are really and absolutely distinct, and since direct predication indicates identity, one can never be predicated of the other: Peter is not Paul.

Considerable difficulty, however, may occur in the consideration of a composite being whose constitutive principles are so intimately united that no sensible experience can make us aware of its composition. Only the intellect, because of its penetrating power, can reach the ultimate realities of such a nature. Let us take an example familiar to all. The rational animal we call man is a being composed of body and soul, which, while really distinct from each other, must be intimately and immediately united to be *man*. One might wonder why the reality designated by “animal”<sup>40</sup> is not also said to be really distinct from that other perfection indicated by the adjective “rational,” in the same manner as the soul is said to be distinct from the body. Or, to put it more succinctly, what is my criterion of truth for affirming a real or a rational distinction between realities which because of their nature and intimate union transcend all sensible cognition?

**Solution.** In general, we know that truth is found in the judgment, that is, in the act of predication. Now if realities which are

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<sup>40</sup> We are not here speaking of the logical order, that is the order of the genus animal which is a second intention or a being of reason; but we are considering the perfection in a subject, expressed by the word *animal*, and the determination of this same perfection by rationality.

represented by different concepts are really identical, so that there is no real distinction between them, I should be able to predicate directly one of the other; e.g., Peter is a man (*praedicatio in recto*). From such direct predication, I conclude that the reality, the nature "man" is not part but the whole of Peter. On the other hand, it is evident that soul cannot be predicated of body: the soul is not the body. Surely no identity can be affirmed there, and I conclude that these realities are really distinct one from the other. Moreover, while soul or body cannot be predicated directly of man — man is not a soul, he is not a body, they can be predicated indirectly (*praedicatio in obliquo*) — man has a soul, he has a body. Such an indirect predication evidently indicates that they are parts of man. The manner, therefore, in which one concept can be predicated of another determines the nature of the distinction between those concepts.<sup>41</sup>

It is evident that the denial of the validity of such an argument would be an implicit denial of the capacity of the human mind to attain truth. "It cannot be denied," says the eminent Charles Boyer, S.J., "without loss of the objectivity of human knowledge."<sup>42</sup> The reason is obvious, since the judgment, which is the act by which we are able to reach truth, depends for its validity on the truth of direct predication of concepts.

We are now able to face our initial difficulty: How can we know with absolute certitude that a given essential perfection is identified with, not a mere part of, and, consequently, not really distinct from another essential perfection. Take, for example, *animal* when said of *man*. The answer is evident. Whenever direct predication is had, identification must be affirmed. Any other essential perfection not determinately expressed will be contained potentially (*modo indeterminato*, says St. Thomas in the third chapter of the *De Ente et Essentia*) in the first perfection which is predicated directly; and

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Arnou, *Metaphysica Generalis*, p. 104, *scholion* 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Cursus Philosophiae*, I, p. 334: "Negari nequit quin pereat objectivitas cognitionis humanae."

will, therefore, have to be predicated not as a concrete noun, but as an adjectival determination; e.g., man is a *rational* animal.<sup>43</sup>

## SUMMARY

To summarize our deductions in a more exact form, let us state that between two perfections a distinction may be real or only logical.

1. *Logical distinction* may be threefold: (a) The mere verbal distinction; (b) the minor logical which has only an imperfect foundation; (c) the major logical with a perfect foundation.

a) Verbal distinction is had between an essence and its definition, e.g., "man" and "rational animal." Clearly this is only a distinction between words. I merely express what the nature of man signifies.

b) Minor logical distinction is found between perfections which *actually*, but only implicitly, include each other in their respective concepts, as is evidently the case in the different attributes of God, e.g., His justice and mercy. The foundation or reason for this later distinction is clearly due to the weakness of our intellect, which can only obtain a very imperfect concept (*conceptus improprius, analogicus*) of an infinite perfection. The fact that the concept of one is directly predicable of the other indicates that objectively these two perfections are identical.

c) Major logical distinction is established between perfections which only *potentially* include each other in their concepts, such as

<sup>43</sup> It is evident that the adjectival modifier referred to, e.g., "rational," must designate an essential perfection, else it could not be contained potentially (*modo indeterminato*) in the essential nature (animal) which has been predicated of the whole. On the contrary in such predicates as: Peter is a white man, "man" in no way (neither actually nor potentially) contains the modifier "white," since the latter indicates only an accidental perfection. Accordingly the whole, that is, "white man," is said by St. Thomas to be an *unum per accidens*. Now our theory of distinction is proposed only for a being that is strictly one, *unum per se*, for it deals with essential perfections. It should be noted, moreover, that unrational as well as rational designates a perfection and not merely a lack of perfection. Thomas is quite clear on this point: "*Irrationale est differentia animalis non propter privationem rationis sed ratione talis naturae ad quam sequitur remotio rationis.*" III, C.G., c. 9.

the perfections which designate genus and specific difference. Here the foundation for such a distinction is caused not by the debility of our mind but by the real distinction, which is found in the object considered, between the essential physical parts of the material essence, matter and form.<sup>44</sup> Our criterion of truth, as we noted above, will lie in the fact of their direct predication of the whole essence—a sign that their respective concepts are not adequately distinct.

2. *Real distinction* may be twofold (*a*) between principle and principle of being, as matter and form; (*b*) between being and being, as Peter and Paul.

*a*) The real distinction between *principle* and *principle of being* has been previously explained.<sup>45</sup> These principles are realities which need each other to constitute a being in the full sense. They are ordered to each other transcendently, in such manner as to require a most intimate union in the order in which they are—whether it be in the order of being, of essence, of activity. Such is the union of matter and form, soul and body, act and potency. The fact that either cannot be directly predicated of the whole—we cannot say that Peter is a soul—and cannot be predicated of the other, indicates that they are really distinct and that one does not contain the other actually or potentially. The fact, however, that they are predicated indirectly of the whole—Peter has a soul, Peter has a body—indicates that, although really distinct, they are parts of the whole.<sup>46</sup>

*b*) The real distinction between *being* and *being* presents no difficulty since it is immediately evident.

**Conclusion.** And so we arrive at the conclusion that adequately distinct concepts of realities indicate always a real distinction between these realities, even though they be united to form an essence, or a being that is strictly one, *unum per se*.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 3.

<sup>45</sup> P. 40.

<sup>46</sup> It is important to note that the rules of predication given here apply to concepts of realities which are in the order of essences, and refer to an "*unum per se*" and not to an "*unum per accidens*."

## LOGICAL AND REAL DISTINCTION

DISTINCTION OF REASON	One of the concepts can be <i>directly predicated</i> of the other. In other words, one concept is <i>actually</i> contained in the other	Explicitly . . . <i>verbal distinction.</i> Implicitly . . . <i>minor logical distinction.</i>
<i>Direct predication.</i>	One of the concepts can be directly but indeterminately predicated of a whole essence. Consequently the other concept which is also in the essential order can only be predicated as a modification of the first. It is contained in the first concept not actually but <i>potentially</i>	. . . <i>major logical distinction.</i>
REAL DISTINCTION <i>No direct predication. Neither concept contains the other actually or potentially.</i>	If both can be predicated <i>indirectly</i> of an essential whole  If no predication direct or indirect can be had	. . . <i>real distinction between principle and principle.</i>  . . . <i>real distinction between being and being.</i>



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF LIMITATION**

#### **PROLOGUE**

In the preceding chapter we investigated the problem of multiplicity and found that multiplicity presupposes limitation. We then studied the question of limitation and saw that its solution consisted in an intrinsic potential principle limiting the act. In the affirmation that act is limited by potency, we discovered all the necessary elements for a complete understanding of our fundamental problem concerning "the one and the many." Now it remains for us to apply this abstract principle of the limitation of act by potency to the different concrete orders of realities, so that we may come to understand fully how being can be many, or, as suggested in the initial difficulty, how being can differ from being.

There are three orders to be considered in the world of realities: the order of existence, the order of essences or of natures, and the order of activity. The first, the order of existence, studies being in its most abstract and absolute aspect. It deals with the fact that being is or can be, that it can be actuated in the world of existence, that it can take its place among other beings different from itself. With regard to this existential order, the question is simply this: How is it possible for many beings to exist and not be one? How can the existential act which is the supreme perfection of being be limited and multiplied? This we call the problem of the one and the many in the order of existence.

In the second order, that of essences, we consider the fact that the quiddity (the whatness, nature, or intelligibility of beings—that which is meant by their specific perfection, such as, man, dog, etc.) of beings is sometimes found multiplied, so that not only are there many existing beings, but many beings of the same species, or nature, e.g., many men, many dogs, many trees. How are we to understand this multiplication of the same specific essence? This is the problem of the one and the many in the order of essence.

Finally, as we delve more deeply into our study of the individual, we observe that beings act upon one another; and, if they are living beings, that they also act within themselves (immanently). We observe, too, that by so acting, these beings somehow become different from what they were, without becoming different individuals; Peter, for example, by constant study becomes a philosopher. How, we naturally inquire, can such beings change and remain the same? This is the problem of the one and the many in the order of the activity of the individual.

Our first question then is: What, metaphysically, is the explanation of the multiplicity of beings in the order of existence? Or more precisely: Why must the metaphysical structure of finite beings necessarily be composite to account for their multiplication?<sup>1</sup> The solution, of course, is to be had in the principles of potency and act in this order, namely, essence and “to be.”

The second question may be proposed in this fashion: What is the explanation of many beings having the same specific perfection, or how can the individuals of the same specific nature be many?

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<sup>1</sup> The word “metaphysical” is taken in the sense of principle of being (*ens quo*), not being (*ens quod*); a house is not made of houses, and the realities which make up the structure of being are not beings but principles of being. In Aristotle as well as in Thomas the word “metaphysical” never means, as in the loose terminology of some of the later scholastics, a mere concept, a logical distinction (e.g., *distinctio metaphysica inter genus et differentiam*; cf. Frick, *Ontologia, passim*; this distinction should be and is properly called a major *logical* distinction). This erroneous use of the word “metaphysical” is very confusing and should be avoided. Metaphysical always means real. The supreme science of metaphysics deals with supreme realities, not with mere figments of the imagination. (Cf. S. Th. in *Met.*, Procrum.)

Again, the answer is found in a further application of act and potency. Beings of this kind we see are with metaphysical necessity intrinsically or essentially composite. In other words, they are in the order of essence composed of two principles, one potential, which we call matter, the other one actual, which we call form.

And our final question is: How can the individual change in the order of activity and yet remain the same individual? Again, as we shall see, the explanation of this apparent contradiction is the same. This change can be explained only by having recourse to the principles of potency and act in the order of activity, namely to substance and accident.

### **FIRST QUESTION: What Metaphysically, Is the Explanation of the Multiplicity of Beings in the Order of Existence**

The problem of the "one and the many" has been sufficiently stated. We need mention only that we are considering it now in its most absolute form. The object of our inquiry, then, is not the fact that there may be individuals possessing the same specific nature, but simply that in the order of existence there are many beings. From all that has been proposed in the first chapter, we should be able to infer that if beings are many in the order of existence, their perfection in that same order, their "to be," somehow must be limited; for multiplicity as we have shown, supposes limited perfection, limited act. If, however, act to be limited must have a potential co-principle limiting it, what can this existential potency be, and what is meant by the actuation of such a principle; in other words, what is the intrinsic structure of multiple, finite, and limited being?

**Analysis of Being.** It is clear that since being is that whose act is "to be" (*id cuius actus est esse*), or that to which existence is due (*id cui competit esse*), the act of being is its "to be" (*esse*), or, its

existence.<sup>1a</sup> For existence, as Augustine explains, is the greatest of all gifts in the natural order; it is the actuation of reality, it is that because of which something is; and, as Thomas profoundly remarks, it is the perfection of perfections.<sup>2</sup> Thus almighty God Himself, revealing His name to the inquisitive Moses, affirms in magnificent language that He is His own "to be," His own existence: "I AM WHO AM . . . tell them, HE WHO IS sent me to you."<sup>3</sup>

Existence, therefore, being the actuation of all reality, would be absolutely infinite and consequently such as God is, unique, if it were not limited so as to be the actuation of only a certain degree of reality, of a certain essence which denotes this kind of perfection (of being) rather than *that* kind, e.g., whiteness, man, etc. Essence is that which the mind of man is able to conceive; for the intellect is made to know that which is or can be; and only the essences of things are intelligible. These essences then do not express existence, but if actuated would participate in existence according to their capacity. For the capacity for existence, that is, the mode or manner of being, of the essence "man" is quite different, and much more perfect than that of "tree," or "beast," or "stone," and far less than that of "angel."

Essence, therefore, although it is itself a perfection,<sup>4</sup> is, nevertheless, a potency in regard to the supreme actuality of existence; for while it manifests its own perfection (man, tree, stone), it connotes a definite and limited capacity for its "to be." We cannot conceive the essence "tree" being actuated by the mode of existence of "man." Such a being would not make sense.

Essence, then, can be defined as: *That by which something is what it is; or, that which is designated by the definition.* According

<sup>1a</sup> Later on, in the treatise on the notion of being, we shall have occasion to discuss this description of being at some length.

<sup>2</sup> *De Pot.* VII, 2, ad 9m.

<sup>3</sup> *Ego sum qui sum . . . dic illis: QUI EST misit me ad vos.* Exodus 2:14.

<sup>4</sup> Essence may be considered either a pure act (*secundum quid*), that is, a form not received in matter and unlimited *in the order of essences*, such as greenness, humanity, Raphael; or a composite of matter and form, if further limited, e.g., this man, Peter, Fido, etc.

to Aristotle it is: τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, the whatness of the being, which Thomas renders: That in virtue of which something is such,<sup>5</sup> or that according to which the "to be" (existence) is due to something. The essence of man is that by which he is man, and not angel or stone; it is that through which and in which man has existence.

**Existence**, or "to be" cannot, it is true, be defined, for definition requires intelligibility, but intelligibility demands essence.<sup>6</sup> Nor are we able to conceive "to be" strictly, except as an actuation of the essence. We can say, however, that the "*to be*" is that by which something is or exists; and that while the essence tells what a thing is, existence tells whether it is.

Our problem, therefore, reduces itself to this: Can we determine whether essence and "to be" are the two principles required to understand the multiplicity of beings, and if so, what is the nature of the distinction between them?

**Solution.** From the foregoing explanation, it follows that essence and its "to be" are the two distinct principles needed in the intrinsic constitution of being to account for its multiplicity. Indeed, such a deduction is immediate from the fact (as we have seen in the preceding chapter) that composition of act and potency is the only possible explanation for multiplicity. Now since, as we have noted, in the existential order "to be" is act or perfection, and in this order, essence is that through which something has existence, it should be plain that essence is the requisite potential principle, and the "to be" the requisite act which make multiplication possible.

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<sup>5</sup> "*Hoc per quod aliquid habet esse quid*," *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 1.

<sup>6</sup> The only case in which existence may be said to be intelligible is in God, for there the essence is the "to be," and therefore we should say that not merely is it intelligible, but that it is intelligibility itself *ipsa intelligibilitas*. And consequently if we could understand this "to be," the "Subsistent to be" (*ipsum esse subsistens*), we would know God, and should then require no proof for His existence. But since our cognition of creatures is the only one proportioned to our feeble intellect, and since in creatures the essence (which in material beings is the "proper" object of our intellect in this life) is not the "to be"—as shall be shown—we are not able to define or to conceive existence in a strict sense, and the best we can do is to say that it is the actuation of essence.

Furthermore, in view of the fact that "to be" is related to essence as act to potency, and that in the real order act and potency are really distinct as principle and principle, the nature of the distinction between "to be" and essence would appear evident. Indeed, so clear is this fundamental distinction that St. Thomas hardly ever attempts a formal proof or demonstration of it. To his mind, it was sufficient continually to insist that the only reason why God and creatures are not the same is that God is his "to be" (*Deus est suum esse*), whereas creatures are not their own "to be" but *have* a "to be" proportioned to the capacity of their essence (*creaturae non sunt sed habent esse*).

The question of the nature of the distinction between essence and "to be" has caused a great deal of ink to be wasted. Dialecticians seem often to have forgotten just what the point of this discussion is, and have allowed themselves, at times, to have recourse to invectives rather than to philosophical arguments. The outcome has been painful, and has often distracted good minds from the importance of the question. Some have gone so far as to state that the difficulty of the problem, and more so of the solution, warranted its rejection, or at least its omission from philosophical questions. It would be a sad day for the human intellect when the fundamental problem of reality and its solution are banned from serious consideration. For us who have faced the arduous problem of becoming, of limitation and multiplication, and who have seen in the theory of act and potency an adequate explanation, the question of the distinction between essence and existence presents no insuperable difficulty. It is a necessary deduction, a corollary from the principle of the limitation of act by potency.

The following points, according to Father Boyer,<sup>7</sup> are of great importance and should be kept in mind while discussing the nature of the distinction between essence and existence.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Boyer, *Cursus Philosophicae*, II, p. 268. We state his four points almost verbatim.

1. The essence and the "to be" of finite beings can in no way be separated from each other.<sup>8</sup> The two are transcendently related, hence essence separated from the "to be" is nothing in the order of existing realities. Likewise "to be" without essence has no meaning. Essence and "to be" are not *beings which are*, but beings or *principles by which something is* (*non entia quae sunt sed entia quibus aliquid est*).

2. Essence can have no actuality except that which it receives from a "to be" distinct from itself.

3. Moreover, a third being does not result from the union of essence and "to be," as is the case when the body and soul unite to form man, but that which results is an existing essence. A third being would be a new essence, whereas "being" is essence with a relation to the "to be."

4. That which exists is not essence separated from "to be," nor "to be" separated from essence, but it is an essence existing by means of "to be." "And therefore," says St. Thomas, "as we can say of him who runs or of the runner that he runs in so far as he is subjected to the running, and in some way participates of it;<sup>8a</sup> so in like manner we can say that being, or that which is, *is* in so far as it participates in the act of being."<sup>9</sup> Or, we might analogously declare that being is to its "to be" as the runner is to the "to run."<sup>10</sup> And if we wish to state this more positively, we must say that essence and "to be" are related to each other in the *order of being* as potency to act.

It should be noted, however, that the application of the theory of act and potency in the order of being, in the order of essence, and in the order of operation are made only *analogously*.

<sup>8</sup> Separability, as was explained in the first chapter, is not the criterion of a real distinction between the principles of being (*entia quibus*).

<sup>8a</sup> *Vide* Scholion, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> This is the original text: "*Et ideo, sicut possumus dicere de eo quod currit, sive de corrente, quod currat, in quantum subiicitur cursui, et participant ipsum: ita possumus dicere quod ens, sive quod est, sit, in quantum participat actum essendi.*" In I, Boet. de Hebdomada, lect. 2. Cf. also Quodlibet, II, 3, ad 1m.

<sup>10</sup> The question of analogy will be dealt with in the second section.

Our argument can be presented in a syllogistic form. We intend to prove that the limitation in beings which is a necessary condition for their multiplication is had by a composition of essence and "to be"; or, in other words, that no finite being could exist except for this composition.<sup>11</sup>

**The Proof.** The act of any finite being must be limited by a subjective potency into which it is received, and from which it is distinct. But "to be" is the act of being, and essence is its potency. Therefore, the "to be" of a finite being must be limited by the essence into which it is received and from which it is distinct.

The major premise of the argument is a direct application of the principle of limitation of act by potency; the minor premise has been explained, and is made manifest from the definition of being: "that whose act is 'to be'"; and from the concept of essence: "A nature apt for the 'to be'" (*quidditas ad esse*), "capacity for being" (*capacitas essendi*).

**Doctrine of St. Thomas.** The substance of this argument is found most frequently in Thomas whenever he indicates why creatures are not God. It is his most powerful argument against pantheism. In creatures, that is, in finite beings, the "to be" which is act in the supreme order is received and limited in the essence which is potency in the same order; for it is the essence which determines by limiting the mode of being. "For a subsisting 'to be' — that is, an essence which is its own 'to be' — can only be one," says the Aquinate, "just as a subsisting whiteness can only be one. Wherefore it is necessary that any other thing besides pure act be being by participation, so that in this being the participating substance must necessarily be one thing, and the 'to be' another."<sup>12</sup> This is a strict application of our principle of the limitation of

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<sup>11</sup> The third of the twenty-four theses approved by the Sacred Congregation of Studies reads: "God alone IS in the absolute order of the 'to be,' He is one, most simple (without composition); all other things, which participate of the 'to be,' have a nature by which the 'to be' is limited, and are made up of essence and the 'to be' as principles really distinct."

<sup>12</sup> *Quodl.* III, q. 8, a. 20.



act by potency. In the order of existence the act is the "to be," the potency is the nature, the quiddity. Consequently, a being whose nature (essence) is its "to be," is pure act, infinite, unique, God alone.<sup>13</sup> For all other beings a composition based on a real distinction between principles is absolutely needed to explain the limitation, the finiteness, and the multiplicity of being. In other words, finite being is not conceivable except as an intrinsic composition of act and potency.

This doctrine is fundamental in the natural theology of Thomas. Whatever difference may exist between God and creatures is based ultimately on this: God's "to be" is his essence, creatures are not their "to be" but have it. We quote a few texts:

In God alone is His nature, or whatness, His "to be." But in all other things, the "to be" is different from (beyond) the nature (whatness) to which the "to be" is added. Thus an angel is a composite of "to be" and its nature (what it is). . . . Therefore, the nature itself is as a potency and the acquired "to be" is as its act, and consequently there is a composition of act and potency. . . .

Nevertheless, we do not deny that the rational soul has a certain type of composition, namely, of its "to be" and of *what* it is . . . in this the soul falls below the divine simplicity. . . .

Although in an angel there is no composite of matter and form, nevertheless there is in it act and potency. . . . A nature thus composite (namely of matter and form) is not its "to be," but "to be" is its act. . . . Take away the matter and grant that the form remains without matter, there still remains the relation of the form to its "to be," as of potency to act. And such composition must be understood in the case of angels.

And so in forms subsisting by themselves, we find potency and act, insofar as the "to be" is the act of the subsisting form which is

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<sup>13</sup> Essence or quiddity indicates the intelligibility of a being, the subject (object) of a definition. Substance signifies a certain mode of "to be"; "that namely whose quiddity it is 'to be' not in another." Essence, therefore, differs from substance in this: (1) essence has greater extension, we speak of the essence of a substance as well as the essence of an accident; (2) essence refers to intelligibility, to the fact that being can be understood; while substance looks rather to the "to be." Nature primarily designates the substance in so far as it can be a principle of action; it can be also said of the operative potencies, such as the nature of intellect, of the will, etc.

not its own "to be." If, however, anything exists which is its own "to be," a thing which is proper to God, there is no potency and act there, but pure act.

There remains in them (spiritual beings) a certain potency, in as much as they are not their own "to be," but participate of the "to be." . . .

Since the substance of an angel, considered in itself, is in potency to "to be," seeing that it has its "to be" from another and that "to be" is its act, therefore, there is in it a composition of act and potency. . . .

We find in them (angels) a certain composition, because in them the "to be" and that which is (nature) is not the same. . . . It has been shown that God is His own subsistent "to be." Besides Him, nothing else can be its own "to be." Hence, in every substance outside God Himself, the substance and its "to be" are distinct.

The "to be" of everything is a participated "to be," since nothing outside of God is its own "to be." . . .

Every created thing participates, so to speak, of the nature of being; because only God is His own "to be." . . .

Every thing participated is related to that which participates of it as its act. . . . But the participated "to be" is limited according to the capacity of the participant. God alone, therefore, who is His own "to be," is pure and infinite act. In intellectual substances, though, there is a composition of act and potency, not indeed in the line of matter and form, but a composition of form and the participated "to be."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "In solo Deo suum esse est sua quidditas vel natura; in omnibus autem aliis esse est praeter quidditatem, cui esse acquiritur. . . . Sic angelus compositus est ex esse et quod est (quidditas) . . . ideo ipsa quidditas est sicut potentia et suum esse acquisitum est sicut actus, et ita per consequens est compositio ex actu et potentia" (In II Sent. d. 3, q. 1, a. 1). "Nec tamen negamus animam rationalem quemdam modum compositionis habere, scilicet ex esse et quod est . . . et in hoc anima deficit a simplicitate divina" (In II Sent. d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, sol.). "Licet in angelo non sit compositio formae et materiae, est tamen in eo actus et potentia. . . . Natura sic composita (scilicet ex materia et forma) non est suum esse, sed esse est actus eius. . . . Subtracta materia, et posito quod ipsa forma subsistat non in materia, adhuc remanet comparatio formae ad ipsum esse, ut potentiae ad actum. Et talis compositio intelligenda est in angelis" (S. Th., I, 50, a. 2, ad 3m.). "Et ita in formis per se subsistentibus (he is speaking of the human soul), invenitur potentia et actus, in quantum ipsum esse est actus formae subsistentis, quae non est suum esse. Si autem aliqua res sit quae sit suum esse, quod proprium Dei est, non est ibi potentia et actus sed actus purus" (De anima, a. 6). "Remanet in eis (spiritual

One text from the *De Ente et Essentia* is often quoted because of its clarity, precision, and beauty. Here St. Thomas argues from an analysis of the concept; and it might be well for the student to recall what has been said in the last chapter about the criterion of truth for a real distinction between principle and principle. This is the argument in a very few words: I am able to conceive a certain essence, and I note that such a concept does not include as a constituent the "to be." My concept of that essence, then, is adequately distinct from existence. Should such an essence, therefore, be found existing in the world of realities outside my mind, it would have to be really distinct from its own "to be." Let us now hear the profound words of St. Thomas:

Whatever is not contained in the concept of essence or of quiddity comes to it from without, and forms a composition with essence, because no essence can be understood without its [constitutive] parts.

Every essence, however can be understood without understanding its "to be"; for I can know what a man or a "phoenix" is, and still remain in the dark as to whether such a being does exist in the world [literally, and not know whether it has a "to be"].

Therefore, it is clear that the "to be" is not the same as [literally, is other than] essence or quiddity, unless perhaps there exist a being whose quiddity is its "to be"; moreover such a being would have to be the One and the First [God]. . . . Consequently it follows in all other beings, that the "to be" and the quiddity [that is, the na-

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beings) *potentia quaedam; in quantum non sunt suum esse sed esse participant'* (*De substantiis separatis*, 6). "*Quia ipsa substantia angeli in se considerata est in potentia ad esse, cum habeat esse ab alio et ipsum esse sit actus; ideo est in eo compositio actus et potentiae*" (*Quodl.* IX, 4, 6). "*Invenitur in eis (angels) aliqua compositio, ex eo quod non est idem in eis esse et quod est. . . . Ostensum est quod Deus est suum esse subsistens. Nihil igitur aliud praeter Ipsum potest esse suum esse; oportet igitur, in omni substantia quae est praeter Ipsum, aliud esse ipsam substantiam et aliud eius esse*" (II, C.G., 52). "*Esse cuiuslibet rei est esse participatum, cum non sit res aliqua praeter Deum, suum esse*" (III, C.G., 65). "*Quodcumque ens creatum participat, ut ita dixerim naturam essendi; quia solus Deus est suum esse*" (*S. Th.*, I, 3, 4). "*Omne participatum comparatur ad participans ut actus eius. . . . Esse autem participatum finitur ad capacitatem participantis; unde solus Deus, qui est suum esse est actus purus et infinitus. In substantiis vero intellectualibus est compositio ex actu et potentia; non quidem ex materia et forma, sed ex forma et esse participato*" (*S. Th.*, I, 75, 5, ad 4m.).

ture or form] are distinct [literally, other, different, something else].<sup>15</sup>

Briefly, as explained in the preceding chapter, there is a real distinction between two realities when the adequate concept of one does not include as a constituent the adequate concept of the other.

But in finite beings essence in no way includes the "to be" as a constituent.

Therefore, essence and the "to be" are really distinct.

We conclude: Every being that is not its own "to be," namely, all creatures, must have an essence, that is, a nature limiting their "to be." Such is the fundamental explanation for their multiplicity, namely, that in the order of existence they are composed of two principles: essence and "to be," which are to each other as potency and act, and consequently are really distinct as principles of being. God only who is "to be" (*"Ipsum Esse"*) is absolutely simple and one.

### SCHOLION: Historical Approach to the Doctrine of the Real Distinction

Before the time of St. Thomas, philosophical writers did not seem to have been deeply concerned over the problem of the distinction between essence and the "to be." This was partly due to the fact that the Greeks had not gone beyond the problem of natures, that is, of essences.<sup>16</sup> They were satisfied to study the

<sup>15</sup> *"Quidquid enim non est de intellectu essentiae vel quidditatis, hoc est adveniens extra et faciens compositionem cum essentia; quia nulla essentia sine his quae sunt partes essentiae intelligi potest. Omnis autem essentia vel quidditas potest intelligi sine hoc quod aliquid intelligatur de esse suo; possum enim intelligere quid est homo vel phoenix et tamen ignorare an esse habeat in rerum natura. Ergo patet quod esse est aliud ab essentia vel quidditate, nisi forte sit aliqua res cuius quidditas sit ipsum esse suum; et haec res non potest esse nisi una et prima. . . . Unde oportet quod in qualibet alia re praeter eam, aliud sit esse suum et aliud quidditas vel natura seu forma sua"* (*De Ente et Essentia*, c. 5).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, c. 1; Muller-Thym, *The University of Being in Meister Eckhart of Hochheim*, p. 2.

problem of ideas, or of natures, and their corresponding limitation and multiplication in the order of material individuals. Plato never speaks of this distinction in a formal sense, although some of his phrases and his vague theory of participation are suggestive. Aristotle apparently has nothing about it. He is concerned largely with becoming in the material world, whether substantial or accidental, and in this order he has evolved the theory of act and potency (matter and form) which has been the foundation of our solution.

Perhaps the first clear indication of the problem and of its solution is found in the Neoplatonists. Plotinus (204-270), especially in his *Enneads*, Book VIII, affirms the necessity of composition in all beings except in the first Uncreated Principle. So that if many ideas exist (subsisting intelligences), there must be some composition in them. This, however, he asserts can only be a composition of matter and form, even in immaterial beings.

St. Augustine (354-430) was really the first to understand the meaning and the necessity of the real distinction between essence and existence in creatures. As a young convert he had meditated the profound words of revelation: "I am who am; tell them He who is sent me to you." In his *Confessions*, Book VII, he tells us that while reading the *Enneads* of Plotinus he came face to face with the philosophical aspect of the problem. "And I looked at other things below You, and saw that they neither were nor were not absolutely. They *were*, indeed, since they came from You, but they *were not*, since that which You are, they were not."<sup>17</sup>

Whatever may have been the mind of Boethius<sup>17a</sup> (480-524) on this question, he is sometimes quoted by Aquinas in favor of this distinction. And his words certainly lend themselves to such an inter-

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<sup>17</sup> "Et inspexi cetera infra te, et vidi nec omnino esse nec omnino non esse: esse quidem, quoniam abs te sunt, non esse autem, quoniam id quod es non sunt." (*Conf.* VII, 11.) (Cf. Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, p. 44, et seq.; Boyer, *La formation de St. Augustin.*)

<sup>17a</sup> It has been conclusively shown by Roland Gosselin and other modern scholars that Boethius did not use *esse* in the existential sense.

pretation, as when, for instance, he solemnly affirms: "The 'to be' and that which is are different."<sup>18</sup>

Among the Arabs, Al Farabi (940) clearly proposes the real distinction: "We must distinguish in all existing beings their essence and their existence."<sup>19</sup>

Avicenna (Ibn-Sina, 1037) defended the doctrine of the real distinction in finite beings against Averroes.<sup>19a</sup> In his defense he insists that the supreme being whose nature is to be, is necessary and simple, while other beings are not necessary but may begin to be, so that existence comes to them as it were from without, *ab extrinseco*. St. Thomas often cites what Avicenna has to say on the question.<sup>20</sup> Avicenna (1070), following the doctrine of the Neoplatonists, affirms the necessity of a real composition in creatures to distinguish them from their Creator. This, however, following the doctrine of these same philosophers, he explains to be matter and form.<sup>21</sup>

According to Maimonides (Rabbi Moses, 1204), existence is an accident which is received in the created essence and consequently distinct from it. In God this is not so. "It is known," he says, "that existence is an accident appertaining to all things, and therefore an element superadded to their essence. This must evidently be the case as regards everything the existence of which is due to some cause. . . . But as regards a being whose existence is not due to any cause, God alone is that being, for his existence is absolute, existence and essence are perfectly identical."<sup>22</sup>

In the Middle Ages some important writers accepted for all creatures, even for angels, the composition of matter and form.

<sup>18</sup> *Diversum est esse et id quod est.* (*De Hebdomada*, P.L. t. LXIV, col. 1311B.)

<sup>19</sup> *Oportet distinguere in omnibus entibus existentibus essentiam et existentiam.* (*Alfarabi's philosophische Abhandlungen*, übersetzt von Dr. Fr. Dieterici, p. 108; quoted from Arnou, *Metaphysica generalis*.)

<sup>19a</sup> It should be noted that "esse" in St. Thomas has a complete existential meaning which cannot be found in any earlier philosopher.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *De Pot.*, III, 16; II, C.G., 42; *S. Th.*, I, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Fons Vitae*, V, 42.

<sup>22</sup> *Guide for the Perplexed*, Bk. I, c. 57; Transl. by Friedlander.

This doctrine had come from Avicbron, who in turn had discovered it in the Neoplatonists. Indeed, the theory obtained a certain popularity in those days, so that so great an intellectual as St. Bonaventure did not hesitate to defend and propound it.<sup>22a</sup> And we know how St. Thomas, perhaps because of his deep regard for the Doctor Seraphicus, while denying absolutely that spiritual beings may be composed of matter and form, adds: "And so in a spiritual substance there is a composition of potency and act, and consequently matter and form, provided every potency (even essence) be called matter and every act (even existence) form; nevertheless, *this is not said in the proper sense, using the common meaning of the terms.*"<sup>23</sup>

It is probable that the doctrine of the real distinction between essence and existence was introduced to the Middle Ages by William of Paris, who undoubtedly found it in Avicenna. The opinion of St. Thomas on this most important question has been sufficiently explained; and it is difficult to understand how any intelligent and unbiased scholar could seriously study the works of the Angelic Doctor and have any doubt as to the fundamental position this doctrine holds in his philosophy. Still, not a few authors, the first of them Hervaeus Natalis, have attempted to interpret the text of Thomas to mean just the opposite of what it says. But in recent years, especially after the important studies of Monsignor Grabman,<sup>24</sup> it is generally admitted, even by those who try to refute the truth of this doctrine, that Thomas time and time again affirms the real distinction, and that it is fundamental in Thomistic philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22a</sup> Cf. Anton Pegis, *St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul*, II, p. 26 ff.

<sup>23</sup> "*Et sic in substantia spirituali est compositio potentiae et actus, et per consequens formae et materiae, si tamen omnis potentia nominetur materia et omnis actus nominetur forma; sed tamen hoc non est proprie dictum secundum communem usum nominum.*" (*De Sp. Creat.*, I.)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Acta Hebdom. Thom.*, 1923.

<sup>25</sup> "*Si on considère l'ensemble de la philosophie de St. Thomas on est frappé du rôle organique que joue cette doctrine capitale.*" (Roland-Gosselin, O.P., *De Ente et Essentia*, p. 185.) "*Nous ne craignons pas d'affirmer qu'elle (distinctio realis inter essentiam et esse) soit la clef de voute nécessaire d'une métaphysique proprement thomiste.*" (A. D'Alès, S.I., *Dictionnaire apologetique*, art. Thomisme.)

The entire school of the Angelic Doctor has always held fast to this doctrine, although at times exaggerating the exact meaning of the real distinction, and making it appear a distinction between beings rather than principles of beings.<sup>26</sup> They have constantly shown its enormous consequences in philosophy as well as in theology. Among the more important authors we may mention Capreolus, Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Sertillanges, Pallavicini, Sylvester Maurus, Liberatore, Mattiussi, Billot, De la Taille, Boyer, Maritain, etc. It should be noted that the third of the twenty-four theses *approved* and *recommended* by the Sacred Congregation of Studies affirms the real distinction.

Those philosophers who do not admit the need of a limiting principle, that is, of an intrinsic potency to explain the finite act, and who say that God, the external agent, the efficient cause, is the sole reason for multiplicity, logically, of course, refuse to admit the first application of the distinction of act and potency in the order of being. In general, Scotists, Suarezians, and Nominalists alike deny the necessity of such distinction. Scotus defends his usual formal and modal distinction.<sup>27</sup> Suarez holds only a distinction of reason, and while with his usual love of fair play he does not hesitate to state clearly the correct position of Thomas,<sup>28</sup> still he did not realize the great truth and advantages of this doctrine, but seems rather to have been puzzled and disconcerted by the mysterious aspect of potency in the order of existence.<sup>29</sup> We may add to the list Siger of Brabant, Henry of Ghent, and more recently, Pesch, Piccerelli, and Descoqs.

It is interesting to note<sup>30</sup> that this distinction, which is so far beyond sense experience, and still so fundamental and, we might

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<sup>26</sup> One of the earliest examples of such exaggeration is found in Aegidius Romanus, who thought this distinction to be such as between two separable entities. Nothing could be further from the thought of Thomas.

<sup>27</sup> *In III Sent.*, d. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Disp. Met.*, disp. 31.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Mahieu, *François Suarez*, p. 166.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Arnou, *Metaphysica*, p. 36.



even say, elementary in the field of Metaphysics, has been affirmed by philosophers who certainly knew little of the philosophy of St. Thomas. Descartes, for instance, in his *Meditations*<sup>31</sup> says that "everyone knows the distinction between essence and existence" which is found "in all other things" except God. Spinoza, pantheist though he was, in order to explain the difference between the one infinite substance and its various modes, explains that "the essence of the things produced by God does not involve existence."<sup>32</sup> Even Hegel does not hesitate to affirm: "In every finite being existence is distinct from the concept of that being. God, however, and only God can be thought of as existing. This unity of concept with existence is that which makes the concept of God."<sup>33</sup>

## **SECOND QUESTION: What Is the Explanation of Many Beings Having the Same Specific Perfection?**

**The Problem.** The fact of the problem is clear; the data are immediately from experience. Every day we come in contact with a multitude of individuals possessing the same specific nature, many men, many dogs, etc.; individuals that are specifically "the one," yet differ precisely as individuals. Here again we are confronted by the problem of "the one and the many," but this time, as is obvious, our problem is confined to the order of essences. To the question, then, how can one specific nature be in many individuals, the same answer is given: The multiplication of a specific perfection is possible only because of the limitation of the specific act by its corresponding potency. The solution is clear and absolute. In no other way is multiplication conceivable. Consequently, in treating this question, we shall investigate the nature of these two principles and their relative intrinsic causality, rather than attempt further proof to show their absolute necessity; for this necessity we

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<sup>31</sup> *Med.* V, obj. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ethics*, Part I, prop. 24.

<sup>33</sup> *Encyclopaedia*, I, No. 51.

believe quite evident in the light of all our former demonstrations proving that multiplication can be explained only by an intrinsic composition of act and potency. An essence, therefore, that can be multiplied is necessarily composed of two distinct principles, one actual, which gives the perfection of this specific nature, the other potential, which limits and somehow individuates the specific act.

**The Solution.** This argument can be proposed in form: Act cannot be limited in its order unless it be received in a subjective potency and with this potency form a composite. But the specific essence which is multiplied in many individuals is an act limited in its own order. Therefore, the specific essence or nature which is multiplied in many individuals is received in a potency which limits it intrinsically and forms a composite with it.

Following the terminology of Aristotle and of St. Thomas, we shall call the limited specific act of the individual essence *form*, and its corresponding limiting potency *matter*.

## DEFINITIONS

**Matter.** It is of the utmost importance to have a clear understanding of what is meant by these co-principles, matter and form. In the first place, we say that matter is pure potency. In no way does it signify perfection but indicates a mere capacity for perfection, that is, it indicates that which is perfectible. Hence it is not nothing, it is a reality, although it cannot be conceived except by reason of its relation to its exigency for form. Even when actuated by a form, it is a privation of all other corporeal forms. It would be absurd, then, to imagine matter existing without form, for that would be to say that it is being in act without act, a clear contradiction.<sup>84</sup>

Matter is defined as "the first intrinsic and potential principle of a corporeal essence." It is not a body, but a principle of a body, intrinsically constituting it. It is said, moreover, to be the first princi-

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<sup>84</sup> "Dicere igitur materiam praecedere sine forma, est dicere ens actu sine actu, quod implicat contradictionem." S. Th., I, 66, 1c.

ple because it is not made of other principles. It is called potential because it is pure potency and of itself possesses no act, no perfection, no "to be." The "to be" of a composite substance is neither that of the form alone nor of the matter alone, but of the composite itself."<sup>35</sup> Because it has no act but is a capacity for all material forms, it can be considered as a *privation*.<sup>36</sup>

Matter, however, is not eternal; it is concreated with an initial form, consequently it must somehow be the imitation of an idea in God. "We posit that matter is caused by God. Hence, we necessarily posit that its idea is in some manner in God."<sup>37</sup> Finally, matter limits and individuates the form; and under definite conditions is said to be the principle of individuation.<sup>38</sup>

**Form.** On the other hand, the *form*, the act of the individual essence, actuates matter and completes it. It is defined as "the first intrinsic and actual principle of a corporeal substance or essence." It gives the essential or specific perfection, for it is because of the form that an individual is a man, or a dog, or a tree.

**Union of Matter and Form.** The problem of union between matter and form is vital in philosophy. It depends on the nature of the relation by which they are ordered to each other. We say that they are related *transcendentally*, that is, by their very *entity* they tend toward each other, they need each other; for since matter is mere potency, it cannot be without the form; whereas the form is the act of matter, and could never be nor act except through and with matter. Consequently, no bond is required in such a union, for they are united immediately and exist by a single "to be." And this is why such a substance is said to be perfectly one (*unum per se*); for, as St. Thomas remarks, the unity (oneness) of a being depends

<sup>35</sup> "Esse substantiae compositae non est tantum formae nec tantum materiae, sed ipsius compositi." *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 2.

<sup>36</sup> A privation is the lack of a perfection for which one has a real potency or capacity; as blindness in man.

<sup>37</sup> "Ponimus materiam esse causatam a Deo: unde necesse est ponere quod aliquo modo sit ejus idea in Deo." *De Ver.*, III, 5; cf. also II, 5.

<sup>38</sup> "Individuationis principium est materia . . . non quolibet modo accepta . . . sed solum materia signata." *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 2.

on its "to be." "Everything has its unity in the same way as it has its 'to be.'"<sup>39</sup> If each principle had its own "to be," the composite being could never be a perfect unit, no matter what the bond might be, but merely an accidental one. "A unit cannot arise from two or more things, if there be nothing uniting them, unless one of them is related to the other as act to potency; thus from matter and form we get a unit, without any external bond uniting them."<sup>40</sup>

**Confirmation of Real Distinction.** It is clear, therefore, that such intimate union postulates and confirms the real distinction between essence and "to be." Indeed, were this distinction denied, each would necessarily have its own "to be" identical with its own entity, for matter and form are admitted to be really distinct. We then should be faced with the problem of the union of two existing substantial realities. How such a union could be effected so as to have a perfect unit is not intelligible. Suarez, who realized the enormity of the difficulty and the necessity of somehow solving the problem of union in a corporeal substance, proposed his theory of the substantial modes. These modes are kinds of metaphysical glue, intended to hold together the two separately existing constituents of a material being.<sup>41</sup> We must admit that, having rejected the real distinction between essence and existence, his theory is logical enough, and shows a serious effort toward solving the problem of union. But it is not clear how such a solution can effect anything more intimate than an imperfect unit. What, however, is altogether unintelligible is the doctrine of those authors (Frick, Pesch, Descoqs, and others) who not only deny the real distinction between essence and existence, but even reject the Suarezian modes of union. The only possible union understandable between

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<sup>39</sup> "Unumquodque sicut custodit suum esse, ita custodit suam unitatem." S. Th., I, II, I, c.

<sup>40</sup> "Ex duobus aut pluribus non potest fieri unum, si non sit aliquid uniens, nisi unum eorum se habeat ad alterum ut actus ad potentiam; sic enim ex materia et forma fit unum, nullo vinculo extraneo eas colligante." (II, C.G., 58.). Vide Corollary, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> *Disp. Met.*, disp. 7, sec. I.

two existing realities which are not transcendently related as act and potency, and between which there is found not bond of union, cannot be said to be even an imperfect unit, but a mere juxtaposition of two realities.

It follows from all that has been explained that since matter and form are to each other as potency and act in the order of essence, they are not, strictly speaking, being in an unqualified sense but principles of being and must be designated *principles by which being is*, and not *beings which are*.

**Eduction and Corruption.** Finally, whenever a substantial change occurs, that is, when the nature of a given substance becomes something else, e.g., a plant dies, an animal is generated, two factors, which take place simultaneously, must be carefully distinguished: (1) the form that had been present actuating the matter is corrupted (*corruptio formae*), that is, not destroyed completely, but reduced to the potency of matter, whence it might be educed anew, given the necessary conditions and extrinsic agent; (2) the new material form is not created but educed, that is, drawn out of the potency of matter by the action of an extrinsic agent.

A thing naturally generated is properly said to be, since it has its "to be" in its subsisting "to be"; form, however, cannot be said "to be" in this way, since it neither subsists nor has its "to be" of itself. . . . Properly speaking, it is not the form which is, but form is that by which [something is]. . . . That which is generated is not the form but the composite. And it is generated from matter, insofar as matter is in potency to the composite by being in potency to the form. Consequently, we cannot strictly say that the form is made in matter, but rather that it is *educed* from matter.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> "Res enim naturalis generata dicitur esse per se proprie quasi habens esse in suo esse subsistens; forma autem non sic esse dicitur, cum non subsistat nec per se esse habeat. . . . Forma proprie non fit, sed est id quo fit. . . . Id quod fit non est forma sed compositum. . . . Et fit quidem ex materia, in quantum materia est in potentia ad ipsum compositum per hoc quod est in potentia ad formam. Et sic non proprie dicitur quod forma fiat in materia, sed magis quod de materiae potentia educatur." (*De Pot.* 3, 8.)

**SCHOLION: Historical Development of the Doctrine of Matter and Form**

Although Aristotle is really the originator of the theory of matter and form, Plato prepared the way for it by the *ἄπειρον*, which he no doubt found in Anaximander. This *ἄπειρον*, that is, "the indeterminate," is a sort of precursor for the matter, *ύλη*, of Aristotle.<sup>43</sup> The form in Plato is suggested by the shadow of reality, that is, the shadow of the idea, which is projected into the *ἄπειρον*. The union between these two is very imperfect and only accidental at best. Moreover, such a composite being cannot be a reality in the strict sense, for the subsisting idea only is the real. This vague and unsatisfactory theory is far from the clear and profound doctrine of the Stagirite.

Aristotle in the Seventh Book of the *Metaphysics* proposes the true theory. Matter and form are substantially united. Matter is potency, form is act. Matter limits and individuates, form specifies and completes. Their union constitutes an individual, a real unity, *τόδε τι*.

The theory of Aristotle did not prosper till the thirteenth century. True we find in Plotinus<sup>44</sup> that bodies are composed of matter and form. However, the meaning of matter and the mode of union of matter and form of the Neoplatonists have much more in common with the theory of the disciple of Socrates than with that of the "Philosopher."

Although the interpreters of St. Augustine do not agree on the true signification of his matter and form, it seems to be the correct interpretation of the sixth chapter of the twelfth book of the *Confessions* that matter is not pure potency. The same may be affirmed of the Arabs and Jewish philosophers of the early Middle Ages.

It is only with the scholastics of the thirteenth century that the

<sup>43</sup> *Phileb.*, 24a; *Tim.*, 49a, 52d.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Enneades*, VI, Bk. 3, 4.

question of matter and form is brought to its highest point of development. Already at that time two important trends of thought are definitely established: Augustinianism and Thomism.<sup>45</sup>

**Augustinianism** often admits the plurality of substantial forms and generally considers matter an existing reality. This latter tenet, as we have already seen, is a logical deduction from the denial of the real distinction between essence and the "to be."<sup>45a</sup> Matter and form are not principles of beings but things. Consequently, the problem of substantial union seems insoluble, and an exaggerated dualism is an almost necessary deduction.<sup>46</sup>

Although we find a few early non-Franciscan exponents of this doctrine such as Philip the Chancellor (1160-1263), the Augustinian school was largely developed by the Friars Minor. Among others we should name Alexander of Hales († 1245), St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) who held with many others of his time a composition of matter and form in the angelic essence, and the great Duns Scotus (1267-1308) who rejected such composition.

Finally, many authors, Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, among whom we may mention Henry of Ghent († 1293), William of Occam († 1349) and the Nominalists, Albert the Great (1196-1280), Suarez and his entire school, deny that limitation by means of an intrinsic principle is necessary for multiplication. Consequently, any created essence whether corporeal or spiritual can be multiplied within the same species; the ultimate reason for this possibility

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. de Raemacker, *Metaphysica Generalis*, p. 351.

<sup>45a</sup> Whenever the real distinction between essence and "to be" is denied, and a real distinction between matter and form affirmed, the certitude of scientific knowledge seems to be imperiled. This is easily understood because matter in such a supposition, not being pure potency, is therefore intelligible. In such a theory of knowledge there is no reason for postulating a necessary abstraction from matter, since the individual is immediately known. Now without a natural abstraction we are not able to reach universal nature, and cannot therefore have knowledge of an absolute essence. A logical and almost necessary conclusion will be that not certitude but only probability is attainable by the human mind. This conclusion proposed by Occam and some of his disciples has had a harmful influence on modern thought.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la Métaphysique*, cahier, 1, p. 84 seq.

being the finiteness (*finitudo*) of a created essence. It is evident that this view of the problem follows naturally from the denial of the limitation of act by potency.

It must be said also that Suarez calls matter a pure potency, although it has some actuality of existence by itself.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, he holds that there is only one substantial form in a corporeal essence. Finally, as we have stated above, he attempts a solution to the problem of union by a theory of modes.<sup>48</sup>

**Thomism.** We have already explained the true concept of matter and form, and have given reasons for their absolute necessity. Let us add here that *Thomism* insists that matter is pure potency, so that it could not exist without form, and that the substantial form must be unique, for no other form could be substantially united to matter simultaneously with the first: If any such union could be had, it would be only accidental. Finally, we repeat once more that the multiplication of beings in the order of nature is explainable only by the composition of act (form) and potency (matter).<sup>49</sup> Let us quote the words approved and recommended by the Sacred Congregation of Studies: "So far as its essence is concerned, a corporeal creature is a composite of act and potency. This potency and act in the order of essence, we designate by the terms matter and form."<sup>50</sup>

**Corollary.** An immediate deduction from what has been said is that angels, being pure spirits, pure acts in the order of essence, cannot be multiplied in that essence since the form is not received in a potency of matter. Consequently, the angels must differ in species, that is, each angel is its own specific nature, and no other angel can be of the same essence. In the words of Thomas there are as many angelic species as there are angels: "*Quot sunt individua (angeli), tot sunt species.*"<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Disp. Met.*, disp. 13, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, 3, 8.

<sup>49</sup> The intrinsic principles, matter and form, are said to be *intrinsic causes* of the corporeal individual: Matter the material, form the formal cause.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Mattiussi, *Le XXIV Tesi*.

<sup>51</sup> *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 5.



**N.B.** The problem of individuation is organically connected with the question of multiplication of individuals in the same species. In fact, it deals with the ultimate solution of this question, and could be considered as a corollary of this thesis. Because, however, of the profound and difficult nature of the subject, we think it best to omit it till we have acquired clearer notions about substance and accidents. We shall take it up at length in our fifth section.

**THIRD QUESTION: How Can the Individual, in the Order of Activity, Change Yet Remain the Same Individual?**

**Problem.** The problem of "the one and the many" has been proposed and explained in the order of the "to be" and in the order of essences. We have seen that because of the intrinsic composition of act and potency in both these orders, beings can be multiplied, and when this composition is said of the essence, then many individuals may be found possessing the same specific essence. Now we come to our third and final step in the analysis of reality from the point of view of structure, namely, the order of activity. Again the data of experience are constant. The tree grows and bears fruit; the boy becomes man while retaining his individuality. We personally experience continual modifications, and still remain the same persons. So, even in the small world of the individual we find a new application of the problem of "the one and the many." Peter is one in his individuality, in his person; and yet he is many in his thoughts, in his acts of the will, and in all the various changes that are constantly taking place in him.

We must admit that the solution of this problem seems a great deal easier than that of the other two, for here we are much closer to sensible cognition. It is not, indeed, the same thing that is changing and remaining unchanged. The change is a new determination of the being, but one that does not affect the specific perfection, nor the individuation, nor the person of that being. Peter, for example, was Peter before the change, and Peter he remains afterward. It is

not, then, the substance that is essentially changed, as when a tree or a dog dies. In such a case, the specific form was reduced to the potency of matter, and a new form, or new forms were educed from that same potency. In substantial generation a new being begins to be, for the "to be" must always be proportioned to the essence, since it is its act and actuates it according to its capacity. When, therefore, the specific form has been changed and a new essence generated, simultaneously a proportionate "to be" must be produced, else the new being could not exist. However, as we shall see in the treatise on causes, the "to be" is not educed but produced by an extrinsic cause which can only be the subsisting "to be" (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*), that is, God.

Our present concern is something quite different. When, to put it simply, the boy Peter becomes the adult Peter, his essence of man and his person remain unchanged, and consequently he retains the same "to be." The changes or new determinations he undergoes, since they are not of the essence, must come (*accidunt*) to that essence (substance). Hence we call such determination an *accident* to indicate that whether it comes (*eductio*) or goes (*corruptio*), it in no way postulates an intrinsic change of the essence.

**The Solution.** We find it necessary, therefore, to postulate a third kind of composition in corporeal beings: the composition of substance and accident. Like essence and "to be," or matter and form, these are not beings which are, but principles by which being is. The substance is the subject or the remote potency out of which is educed, this time, not a substantial, but an accidental form.<sup>52</sup> This form does not give the first "to be," that is, that by which a being is (*esse simpliciter*), but the second "to be," that is, that by which something that already is receives an added perfection (*esse secundum quid; esse accidentale*). Peter, for example,

<sup>52</sup> It would be disastrous to try to imagine a form (*ens quo*) whether substantial or accidental. Such principles of being are not the object of the senses and are known only by the intellect, because intelligible. The senses know the phenomena, e.g., something white (*album*), the intellect knows why the object is white and what whiteness (*albedo*) is.

after arduous study acquires the science of mathematics; he is now a mathematician; he now possesses a new "to be," proportioned to that new accidental form, namely, the habit of mathematical science. But he is still a man, and he still retains his first or substantial "to be" which is proportioned to his nature of man.

**Union of Substance and Accidents.** Because of this second "to be" we call Peter-the-mathematician an imperfect unit. For, although it is the nature of an accident to be educed from the potency of the substance, and although the accident naturally tends to inhere in its subject, and is related to it at least mediately as act to potency, still the union between the two cannot be as close and intimate as that between matter and substantial form. This truth becomes clear when we advert to the fact that substance and accident possess their own individual "to be," whereas matter and form exist because of one substantial "to be." And since, as St. Thomas remarks, the unity of a being depends upon its "to be,"<sup>53</sup> it follows that that being has a far more perfect unity whose components are united in a single "to be."

**Dynamism of St. Thomas.** The composite of substance and accident, then, is one, if only an imperfect one. By reason of this oneness, every accidental change must affect the whole being. We should never speak as though the potency, the substance, were perfectly static, and the accident something superadded, or as it were glued on the surface of the subject. Such a concept would be utterly erroneous and destroy the dynamism of the theory of St. Thomas. For him every accidental change is somehow, at least mediately, an actuation of the substance. The individual, therefore, should never be considered as an immutable substance, but as one constantly changing, constantly becoming. Even though this becoming may not affect the essence of the individual sufficiently to produce a substantial change,<sup>54</sup> still in view of the fact that it is

<sup>53</sup> S. Th., I, II, 1, c.

<sup>54</sup> At times accidental becoming prepares and disposes the substance, at least, *a longe* for such a change (*generatio substantialis*).

drawn out of the potencies of the substance and is actuating these potencies, it must affect profoundly at least some of the individual's future activities. Here we may note that as this new form, this new accident, is being *educed*, the other accidental form whose place it is taking is *reduced* to the potency of the subject, so that every education means corruption, unless it is merely a matter of increase (*augmentatio*) or decrease (*minutio*) of the same quality. Hence the saying: "the generation of any being means the corruption of another."<sup>55</sup>

Our conclusion then is that because of their activity, their constant becoming, finite beings must be composed of a subsisting subject which is substance, and secondary forms which are accidents, and that in a certain sense these two may be considered as potency and act. In view of this relationship, it is evident that substance and accident must be really distinct.<sup>56</sup>

**The Proof** for this thesis is taken from action, since we are in the order of activity. There is an excellent text in the first part, the fifty-fourth question, the first article of the *Summa Theologica*, which we shall presently quote.<sup>57</sup> It argues that because a finite being is not its "to be," it cannot be its "to act," for "to act" follows "to be," since any being acts in so far as it is in act. Now if "to act" were not really distinct from the potency (virtue) of the substance (its capacity to act), it would follow that the creature is pure act, for "to act" being the actuality of potency, every potency should be actualized, and the subject of potency would be pure act—an absurd conclusion. Hence, the potency must be distinct from its

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<sup>55</sup> "*Generatio unius formae est corruptio alterius.*" We should distinguish clearly between generation and creation. Generation supposes a subject and effects a change in the existing subject. Creation produces a new being "out of nothing," that is, where no subject of change existed.

<sup>56</sup> "There is, besides, in every creature a real composition of the subsisting subject with forms added secondarily, or accidents. This would be unintelligible unless the "to be" were really received in a distinct essence." This is the fifth of the twenty-four theses.

<sup>57</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 54, 1c. Cf. also I, 77, 1c.

actualization, or in other words substance and accident must be distinct as act and potency.

Let us propose the same argument in syllogistic form: If action were really identified with the subject of action, there could be no potency in the subject, and it would have to be its own "to be." But it is not its own "to be." Therefore, this action we call an accident is really distinct from the substance. It must be said to be act with regard to the potency of the substance, for it is nothing else than the actuation of the substance according to the capacity of the substance, or according to the substance's potency toward act.

As St. Thomas states, it is impossible for the action of an angel, or of any other creature, to be its own substance; for an action is properly the actuation of a power (*actualitas virtutis*, that is, in the sense of a potency) just as the "to be" is the actuality of a substance, or of an essence. It is impossible for anything which is not pure act but has some admixture of potentiality, to be its own actuality; for actuality is opposed to potentiality. But God alone is pure act. Hence only in God is His substance the same as His "to be" (*esse*) and His "to act" (*agere*).

The same argument could be applied in the order of local motion, or of qualitative and quantitative change. We shall see later (in the philosophy of nature) why those accidents which flow naturally from the substance (properties or proper accidents, *accidentia propria*) and are not educed by the action of an extrinsic agent, can be said to be the potencies and not the acts of the subject in the order of activity. It is sufficient to state here that these "proper accidents" are required because act and potency must be of the same genus, whether substance or accident. Hence the substance is in potency to the accident only in a remote sense.

Many and difficult are the questions which concern the nature, the definition, and the mode of being of substance and accident. To attempt adequate treatment of these complicated questions at this time would interfere with the unity of the problem of "the one and the many." It seems better, therefore, to forego a discussion

of them until later. In our last chapter on the predicaments we shall propose and discuss the more important problems of substance and accident.

### SUMMARY

By way of summary of this treatise on act and potency, we present a brief, logical presentation of the problem and its solution.

**The Problem.** The one and the many.

1. The difference between being and being: The fact that they differ suggests that there must be many things.

2. The multiplicity of being: In order that beings be multiplied, they must be limited.

3. The limitation of being: If being is limited, it must be composite.

4. The composition of being: It admits the possibility of becoming and this possibility leads to the solution of the problem of motion.

### The Solution

1. If being is changeable, if it can become what it was not, it must be made of act and potency. Therefore:

*Thesis:* Act and potency so embrace being that whatever exists is either pure act or a composition of act and potency.

2. If being is limited (finite), its act must be limited by an intrinsic potency.

*Thesis:* Act can be limited only by potency. Consequently, in any order in which an act is pure it must be unlimited (infinite) and unique. But whenever it is found to be limited, it must be united with potency to make a composite being.

3. The multiplicity of being is had in three orders. Hence three applications are made:

a) In the order of existence, finite beings are many because they are composed of essence and "to be," that are to each other as potency and act and are really distinct.

b) In the order of essence, beings can be multiplied in the same

specific nature, if their essence is composed of matter and form that are to each other as potency and act and are really distinct.

c) In the order of activity, motion is possible, beings can become; and because of this becoming finite beings must be composed of substance and accident that are to each other as potency and act and are really distinct.

Going back to the initial difficulty, we see clearly that finite beings differ from God, the infinite, because God is pure act, He is His "to be"; creatures, on the contrary, are composed of act and potency, they are not their "to be."

Angel differs from angel because each angelic form is a definite degree of perfection, a specific spiritual nature in the plenitude of that perfection.

Corporeal creatures differ from angels because the essence of the former is composed of matter and form, whereas the angels are pure forms.

Corporeal creatures of distinct species differ because of the diverse specific perfection of their form.

Corporeal creatures of the same species differ from one another because, as we shall find, the principle of individuation which is signate matter limits and determines the form to be this. Moreover, in the perception of the senses they are seen to differ because of their diverse accidents. These, however, are not the constitutive principle of individuation, but a mere manifestation of the individual.

### **In the Order of Being**

God — essence and "to be" are identified

Creature —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{essence}}$  are distinct

### **In the Order of Essence**

Angel —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{essence}}$  is a simple form

Corporeal being —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{essence}}$  —  $\frac{\text{form}}{\text{matter}}$  — essence is composed of  
matter and form

### In the Order of Individuals of Different Species

Angelic Form — Each form is a different degree of perfection

Raphael —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{Raphaelity}}$

Gabriel —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{Gabriality}}$

The same holds in the case of corporeal beings of different specific natures.

Fido —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{essence}}$   
of dog

Peter —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{humanity}}$

### In the Order of Individuals of the Same Species

Peter —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{essence}}$  —  $\frac{\text{form}}{\text{signate matter}}$   
making the  
form this form<sup>58</sup>

Paul —  $\frac{\text{to be}}{\text{essence}}$  —  $\frac{\text{form}}{\text{signate matter}}$   
making the  
form that form

<sup>58</sup> This last step will be seen in the question of individuation.



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## SECTION II

### THE NOTION OF BEING

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#### PROLOGUE

**The Problem.** We have studied the fundamental problem of reality—the problem of “the one and the many”—and, in a certain sense, solved it by a threefold application of the theory of act and potency to the respective orders of existence, of natures, and of action. A further question, however, presents itself: If this reality is objectively what I have discovered it to be, namely, a composite of act and potency, why is it that my concept of reality, my concept of “being,” seems in no way to correspond to the truth of this reality? My concept of “being,” it appears, is one; it expresses that which is; it is applied to, predicated of, all kinds of things, and seemingly in the same manner. Apparently, therefore, my concept of “being” is univocal. In every predication it signifies precisely the same thing: “being.” If this is so, a very serious difficulty arises, for, certainly, each reality is different from every other. Hence, in order that my intellect may attain truth, the concept of “being” would have to change every time I predicate it of different things. An angel, for example, is not “being” in the same manner as a stone. An angel is a living being, whereas the stone is an inanimate being. Again, an angel is a spiritual being; a stone, material; the angel is capable of vast knowledge, ardent love; the stone knows nothing, desires nothing. Now, when I say: “angel is ‘being,’ and stone is ‘being,’” am I able to readjust the *predicate* so as to fit the subject? It would seem not. And the reason appears evident. Any difference that I find: spiritual, material, living, corporeal, and the like, if they are realities, must ultimately be reduced to this, that they are “being,” and, therefore, my knowledge of them must be expressed by the concept of “being.” Nothing could be plainer than that. But does my concept, always signifying “being,” in no way manifest the

difference between being and being? If it does not, it is obviously not true. A concept which always means one and the same thing simply does not conform with reality, in which beings are many and different. Such is the problem of being, of "the one and the many," in the conceptual order.

**How Does It Differ From the Problem of the Universals?** Now to say, as some have erroneously said, that the problem of the concept of being is merely another view of the problem of the universals, is to ignore completely the nature of the abstraction required for the understanding of this problem. The universal concept "man," for example, is always the same (univocal), whether obtained by an abstraction from Peter or from Paul. In this abstraction, the manifestations of the individual differences between Peter and Paul are dropped; and the concept of man which necessarily results from this natural abstraction is the concept of a specific nature.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, such a concept is predicable of Peter and Paul in exactly the same sense; and therefore, in so far as it can understand the nature of man, the human intellect must affirm that Peter and Paul is each *man*, univocally. The reason for this identity in predication is, of course, the fact that the individual differences were not actually retained in the abstracted concept of the specific nature. It is true, indeed, as St. Thomas states, that even though this nature<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The natural abstraction of the intellect from the particular to the universal will be discussed at length in the "philosophy of man." Here it may be briefly described as follows: The sensible knowledge of the particular which, in the imagination, is called the "phantasm" is elevated and transformed by a beacon of light called the "agent intellect." The phantasm is now made to act in the guise of an instrumental cause upon the intellectual faculty which is designated as the "possible intellect." Because of the transformation brought about by the agent intellect, the matter in the phantasm is relinquished, that is to say, it "drops out," and the impression received in the intellectual faculty, the possible intellect, is the image of a nature without its material elements. Since matter is the ultimate reason for the individuation, such a "purified" nature is merely specific, and in no way individual. This, psychologically speaking, is what we mean by the natural abstraction of the universal from the particular. It is called natural, because that is the way the human intellect works of itself and without any direction of the will. Cf. R. E. Brennan, O.P., *Thomistic Psychology* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), pp. 179 sq.

<sup>2</sup> This is true of generic as well as of specific nature.

must be predicated of the *whole* Peter and of the *whole* Paul, it is said to contain potentially these individual differences also. By this observation the Angelic Doctor is merely pointing out the fact that this specific nature is capable of being further determined by a determination from without the concept itself. Thus the "this" in the concept of, e.g., "this man," is not *actually* had from the nature of man as man, but "potentially" from without.<sup>3</sup> When we consider the concept of "being," however, we find that our abstraction is quite different. For, as we have already noted, the ultimate determination which will make my concept of "being" become "this being" must be actually and not merely potentially contained in the very concept of "being." This last determination, since it cannot be nothing, must indeed be "being"; and, consequently, the concept of that determination or of the "this" must ultimately express what the concept of "being" signifies. In other words, we must say that the concept of "this being" signifies "being" plus "this," but that the "this" means ultimately nothing else except "being." And this observation brings us face to face with the curious fact that "this being," or "being" plus "this," signifies "being" plus "being," and therefore adds nothing to the mind beyond the concept of "being."<sup>4</sup> It is evident, then, that it would be absurd to imagine the abstraction of the concept of "being," which is both

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 3.

<sup>4</sup> This fundamental difficulty is proposed by St. Thomas in the *Commentary of the Metaphysics of Aristotle*. "Parmenides argues as follows: Outside of 'being,' there is nothing but non-being; and that which is not 'being' is nothing. Since 'being' is one, whatever is outside the 'one' is nothing. From this argument it is clear that Parmenides was thinking of the concept of 'being,' which appears always to be one, and the same, and univocal; for it is unthinkable that something be added to the concept of being so that one concept of being be distinguished from another. For that which would be added to being must necessarily be something outside of and distinct from being. But the only thing outside of, or extraneous to, being is non-being or nothing. Hence, it appears that the notion of being cannot be modified, cannot be anything but one, unique, and univocal. On the other hand, we observe that specific differences added to a genus do modify the genus, but these differences are precisely outside the essence of the genus. Specific differences do not participate in the essence of the genus, as stated in the Fourth Book of the *Topica*. But anything we might try to conceive as outside being is non-being, and, therefore, it cannot

one and many, as identical with what we call the abstraction of the universal from the particular.

**Dilemma.** At the start, then, of our investigation of the problem of the "one and the many" in the conceptual order, we find ourselves confronted with a formidable dilemma. If the concept of being is admittedly one and the same, it either corresponds to *all* that is real, or it does not. If it does, we would seem compelled to admit with Parmenides and with the Pantheists of all time that God and all other things are being in precisely the same sense, and hence that we ourselves are the same as God and ultimately the same with God. If, on the other hand, the concept of being in no way corresponds with reality, we have no alternative except out and out skepticism. We might try to adopt some sort of middle course suggested by Plato's doctrine of ideas and the obscure teachings of the Neoplatonists, and maintain that being is one but corresponds with only part of reality, so that either God alone is being and we are not being, or vice versa, that only we are beings. The consequence of this doctrine, however, is complete disaster, for it precludes the possibility of our knowing anything of God. The reason why it does so is evident: all knowledge is reducible to the concept of being. Hence, if God cannot be conceived as being, then He cannot be conceived at all. This is the position of Rabbi Moses (Maimonides), and of all the agnostics. As a matter of fact, these agnostics deny not only that anything of God can ever be known by us, but, since the concept of being, the foundation for all

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modify the concept of being."

*"Argumentatur enim sic (Parmenides). Quidquid est praeter ens est non-ens: et quidquid est non ens est nihil. Ergo quidquid est praeter ens est nihil. Sed ens est unum. Ergo quidquid est praeter unum est nihil. In quo patet quod considerabat ipsam rationem essendi quae videtur esse una, quia non potest intellegi quod ad rationem entis aliquid superveniat per quod diversificetur; quia illud quod supervenit enti, oportet esse extraneum ab ente. Quod autem est huiusmodi, est nihil. Unde non videtur quod possit diversificare ens. Sicut etiam videmus quod differentiae advenientes generi diversificant ipsum, quae tamen sunt praeter substantiam eius. Non enim participant differentiae genus, ut dicitur quarto Topicorum. . . . Ea vero quae sunt praeter substantiam entis oportet esse non ens, et ita non possunt diversificare ens."* (In I Met., lect. 9, 138.)

thought, can be predicated only of limited, finite being, they go further and deny that God is.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the aforementioned doctrines are the only possible solutions to our problem, were we to admit that the concept of being is perfectly one in the univocal sense, and that the abstraction by which we come to this concept is the same as that by which we obtain a universal. In that event, being would have to be considered a sort of supreme genus, and from such a notion of being two great errors must inevitably follow, pantheism or agnosticism, which in their last analysis come to the same absurdity, the denial of God.

**A Transcendental Concept.** It is imperative, then, for us to realize at the outset that the abstraction of being is not the same as that of the universal. To designate the difference between the two we call the concept of being transcendental. *By a transcendental concept we mean one which somehow is predicable not only of the individual (that is true of every universal) but even of every difference between individual and individual.* The concept of being must be just that. We must say that Peter is being, that man is being, that animal is being, that rationality is being, etc. It is a transcendental concept, and the unity of such a concept cannot be the perfect unity of a universal nature. "Being" cannot be the supreme genus.<sup>6</sup>

**A Twofold Problem.** Merely to affirm, however, that being is a transcendental concept does not solve our problem. In fact, this

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *De Pot.*, VII, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Answering the difficulty of the Pantheist as to the unity of the notion of being, St. Thomas says: "They (the Pantheists) fell into error because they dealt with being as though it were a univocal concept and an essence, as is the essence of a genus. This, however, cannot be done, for being is not a genus, but is indeed differently (analogously) predicated of different things. And that is the reason why, in the First Book of the *Physics*, the proposition, that being is one, is said to be false. For it is not an essence, as a given genus or species is."

"*Sed in hoc decipiebantur, quia utebantur ente quasi una ratione et una natura sicut est natura alicuius generis: hoc enim est impossibile. Ens enim non est genus, sed multipliciter dicitur de diversis. Et ideo in primo Physicorum dicitur quod haec est falsa: ens est unum; non enim habet unam naturam, sicut unum genus vel una species.*" (In I Met., lect. 9, No. 139.)

problem is twofold: a problem of *abstraction* and of *predication*. How, we inquire, can such a concept abstract from all that is real and still be predicable of all that is real? In general, we may indicate the direction of our solution by stating that, first, the concept of being, because it is transcendental, is not perfectly one, but in an indefinite manner, also many; and that, second, in its actual predication it is an analogous concept. In other words, every time being is said of any class of being or even of any individual, the concept has to be readjusted from within.

**Abstraction and Predication.** Consequently, our treatise on the concept of "being" will contain two questions: (1) The problem of *abstraction* or *unity* of the *concept*. Does the concept of "being," like the concept of genus, abstract perfectly from the differences of diverse beings, so that it must be said to have perfect unity? Our answer is that it does not. The abstraction of the concept of being is not like that of a universal, of a genus, resulting in perfect unity, for it is a transcendental concept. Indeed, its unity is so imperfect that it is said to contain actually, yet indefinitely, all beings.<sup>6a</sup> (2) The problem of *predication* or *multiplicity* of the *concept*. How can a transcendental concept, that is, one whose extension is unlimited, be predicated of all beings without error? The difficulty is evident: nothing besides being (for besides being there is precisely nothing) can be added to the first concept to limit or determine it, and make it fit beings that are particular, and different even to the point of being contraries. In solving this difficulty, we show that "being" is an analogous concept, a concept which in the actual predication undergoes a readjustment to make it fit the subject of predication. Thus when I say: God is being, and man is being, my concept of "being" has changed in each instance, not, indeed, by adding something from without the concept, something that is not being (for that is quite impossible), but by a change within the concept "being" itself. For the analogy of the concept of "being" is

<sup>6a</sup> The schoolmen speak of an abstraction of confusion (*abstractio confusionis*); we prefer the term abstraction of indefiniteness.

had, as we shall see, by means of a proportion between the terms of a transcendental relation in the concept. When through our study we have grasped this great fact, we shall at length find that the intellect of man cognizes reality in its objective truth.

### FIRST QUESTION: The Abstraction and the Unity of Being, or — Whether Being Is Transcendental

**First Concept.** "The concept of being is the first which the human mind can grasp, and to that concept all others must be reduced."<sup>7</sup> One simply cannot conceive non-being, that is, absolutely nothing, for the object of the intellect is being, and whatever is known by man must be conceived as being (*sub ratione entis*). It is clear from this self-evident assertion that "being," like all ultimates, cannot be defined. As the first of all concepts it cannot be said to belong to a genus; and as the simplest of concepts (since all other concepts are reducible to it) it can be defined neither by its logical nor its physical constituents. But perhaps we may be able to describe what we mean by "being." In the first place, we note that the word being is not taken in its participial use, as when I say: "Being in a rage he murdered his best friend"; but is taken as a noun, as a thing, as when I say: "What a lovely being is a rose." Now "just as the act of a living being is '*to live*,' so 'being' [in the latter sense] is that whose act is '*to be*.'"<sup>8</sup> St. Thomas describes it also as "that whose due it is to be"<sup>9</sup> so that when I conceive "being," my thought is of a "something" that *is* or *can be*, something that looks toward "to be." I have, therefore, the concept of an essence, that is, something intelligible, even if that intelligibility is grasped only in so far as it indicates order or relation to a "to be."

**Difficulty.** It might be objected that the so-called first and simple

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *De Natura Gen.*, c. 1; *De Ver.*, I, 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Quodl.* II, 3.

concept of "being" is neither first nor simple, since to conceive it I must primarily obtain the concept of essence. This objection vanishes, however, when we realize that the concept of essence cannot be had without its relation to the "to be," for the intelligibility of essence consists precisely in its being ordered to a "to be." Hence, the concept of essence is equally as simple and as first as the concept of "being." The sole difference is that I conceive "being" as a composite of essence and "to be," as if essence and "to be" were its constitutive parts;<sup>10</sup> whereas in my concept of essence the "to be" is not considered as a constitutive part, but merely as the necessary term of relation.

The concept of "being," therefore, is not absolutely simple; it signifies potency and act, essence and "to be," so that in my true concept of God, the Supreme Being, I must correct the deficiency of the human intellect, and assert that in God the essence is the "to be" and cannot be considered as a potency, for God is pure act. Consequently my concept of God, the pure act, is not a simple concept but a denial of the composition which the intellect of man, because it is in matter, must conceive even in the first and simplest of all concepts, the concept of "being."<sup>11</sup>

**Opinions.** The perfection of the human soul, St. Thomas tells us, consists in abstracting from the body.<sup>12a</sup> By this abstraction the soul is made more perfect in knowledge and virtue. That we may the better grasp the solution of our present problem which lies in understanding the abstraction of the concept of being, we shall

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<sup>10</sup> "The 'to be,'" says St. Thomas, "is not an accident but is, as it were, constituted by the essence. It is substantial, yet not substance; for we say of an individual substance that it is. Therefore the 'to be' is an essential predicate." "*Esse enim rei (creatae), quamvis sit aliud ab eius essentia, non tamen intelligendum quod sit aliquid superadditum ad modum accidentis, sed quasi constituitur per principia essentiae.*" (In IV Met., I, 2, No. 558.) "*Esse vero, quod in sua natura unaquaeque res habet, est substantiale. Et ideo cum dicitur Socrates est . . . est de predicato substantiali.*" (In V Met., lect. 9, No. 896.)

<sup>11</sup> This is why we cannot from the knowledge that God is pure act and necessary being, conclude that He is; for this knowledge is had by a denial of the natural composition of the concept, and not from a realization of the "to be."

<sup>12a</sup> Cf. II, C.G., c. 79.



give a little more consideration to abstraction. We have already explained, it will be recalled, how natural abstraction takes place, and how necessary this abstraction is. As we have seen, the ray of light of the agent intellect elevates and transforms the phantasm, thus bringing about a dematerialized impression of the object in the possible intellect, which results in the act of knowledge. We have noted the extrinsic dependence of the intellect on matter, on the particularized knowledge of the senses, and the act of the intellect by which the universal concept, which is the foundation of all science, is obtained.

This act of the intellect is what St. Thomas calls the abstraction of the universal from the particular.<sup>12</sup> It is had in the natural actions of the cognoscitive faculties of man, so that for every particular sensible impression received, the concept of a universal nature naturally and immediately follows. According to St. Thomas, the knowledge of the individual is not a primary concept but is had by a sort of reversion or return (*reversio, reditus*) to the sensible impression.

Scotus and Suarez, on the contrary, hold that man's first concept is particular, and, consequently, that another act of the intellect is required to obtain a universal idea, cutting off, as it were (*praecisio*), the individuating marks. After this delicate operation has been completed, the intellect is in position to know the universal essence. This theory is founded upon the denial of matter as the reason for individuation, and in the last analysis, upon the rejection of the fundamental principle of the limitation of act by potency. It is clear that in such a doctrine the abstraction of "being" will not be the first concept, but the outcome of a series of pre-cisions or cuttings.

**Scotus.** The theory of Duns Scotus (1267-1308)<sup>13</sup> is not easy to grasp. For him the concept of being has perfect unity, since it is

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *S. Th.*, I, 85, 1, ad 1m.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Op. Oxon.*, I, d. 3.

attained by a perfect precision from all its inferiors, that is, from all beings and modalities. In fact, because of the famous formal Scotistic distinction (*distinctio formalis ex natura rei*) which, although not real, is nevertheless more than a mere distinction of the mind, Scotus establishes his perfect precision in regard to the concept of "being" between the formalities of being and the four supreme modes.<sup>14</sup> By reason of this distinction, Scotus affirms that these modes are not "being" in a formal sense. Three important conclusions necessarily follow: (1) "Being" is not a transcendental concept in the sense explained; (2) "being" is a univocal concept and somewhat like a genus; and (3) consequently, like a genus, it contains all differences (modes) *not actually*, but only *potentially*, so that it will have to be determined from without.

This seems a very clear-cut doctrine and easily stated. Its applications, however, seem rather difficult to understand and to accept. Indeed, if this doctrine is applied to the real order so that, objectively, God as well as creatures are said "*to be*" in exactly the same sense, Pantheism would seem to be a natural deduction. Certainly Scotus is not a Pantheist. The theory, therefore, must be understood in a purely logical sense. This is the opinion of some of the modern interpreters of Scotus.<sup>15</sup> Our objection against this view is that such a concept, taken in a purely logical sense, is of no earthly use for philosophizing. Moreover, the concept of "being," according to Scotus, dissociated from all essence and signifying merely existence, seems beyond the capacity of the human mind to grasp. As Mr. Gilson justly remarks, the human intellect in its present

<sup>14</sup> There are according to Scotus four supreme modes of being: aseity, abaleity, perseity, and inaleity, respectively for God, creature, substance, and accident. By adding any one of these modes (which may be called supreme differences) to the concept of being (which is like *sicut* a genus) we are able to contract (reduce and limit) the concept of being to any of the supreme classes of being.

<sup>15</sup> "*Ce qu'il faut retenir, c'est que l'ens univocum . . . (est) une abstraction poussée très loin . . . jusqu'à dessencier l'être; l'ens univocum . . . idée pure. L'univocité est conceptuelle, logique.*" (S. Belmond, *Études sur la philosophie de Duns Scotus* I, p. 316, quoted from De Raeymaker, *Metaphysica generalis*, p. 303.)

state is capable of far more according to Scotistic theories than in the doctrine of Thomas.<sup>16</sup>

**Suarez.** Suarez, as we have observed, states that the first concept of man is not a universal but a particular essence. Having denied the real distinction between essence and the "to be," he was compelled to adopt some sort of precision in order to explain the concept of being. Because the abstraction of confusion advocated by Thomists is, as we shall see, possible only because of the transcendental relation of essence to existence; and the Scotistic perfect precision and the univocity of "being" was difficult to accept, Suarez elects a middle road. The concept of "being," he says, is perfectly one, but the precision is only non-mutual. Consequently, "being" is transcendental and analogous.

The meaning of this precision, Suarez explains in this wise: The concept of "being" is had by abstracting (prescinding) from all the notes by which being differs from being. These differences, however, because they must be considered as beings, are *actually* (*actu*) contained in our transcendental concept, in so far as they are being (*quatenus sunt entia*). They may, nevertheless, be considered in so far as they are said to be *such* beings (*qua talia*), that is, by reason of their differences. And in that sense they are *not contained actually* in the transcendental concept of being, but only *potentially*. The concept of being, then, does not *actually* contain the differences in so far as they are differences, and, for this reason, the precision is complete. On the other hand, we must say that these differences are being in a formal sense and consequently from

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<sup>16</sup> "It is not in the least surprising after that, to see the Scotist intellect out-running the data of sense, leaving them much farther behind than the Thomist intellect can possibly do. By birthright . . . its proper object can be only a pure intelligible, exactly as in the case of the angelic intellect. . . . And it is this that explains the famous Scotist doctrine of the univocity of being. This does not mean that the Divine Being is of the same order as created being. . . . What the doctrine really means is that the quiddity, the very essence of the act of existing taken apart from the modalities, which determine the different modes of existence, is apprehended by the intellect as identical, whatever in other respects the being in question may be." (Gilson, E., *Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, pp. 263, 264. Transl. by A. H. C. Downes, New York: Scribner's, 1936.)

this viewpoint there is no precision.<sup>17</sup> Hence the name "non-mutual" precision.

But if the precision is only "non-mutual," the concept of "being" is perfectly one.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, so impressed is Suarez by this precision which makes being perfectly one, that he insists that the unity of "being" is more evident than its analogy. If, he affirms, we were to choose between the analogy and the unity of the concept of "being," by all means let us deny the analogy which is uncertain, and maintain the unity which seems to be demonstrated with certitude.<sup>19</sup>

Suarez himself seemed to have been aware of the enormous difficulty arising from his doctrine. We might add that we fail to understand how the concept of "being" can be said to be perfectly one, and yet not univocal, or how, if the differences are said to be formally "being," such a transcendental concept could have anything but imperfect unity. Finally, it is not at all clear how, in Suarez's explanation, these ultimate differences (the *qualia*) are only potentially contained in this concept.

**St. Thomas. (1) Abstraction.** The Thomistic doctrine of the abstraction of "being" was fully developed, from the principles found in St. Thomas, by Thomas de Vio Cajetan (1469-1534) in his commentary on the *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 1, q. 2; and in his *De Nominum Analogia*, c. 4. In this theory the abstraction is not had by means of precision, but is a natural act of the intellect similar to the act of abstracting a universal concept from a particular sensible impression. It differs, however, from this latter in this: in the abstraction of the universal, a definite nature is apprehended. Here, on the contrary, due to the obscurity of the perception, no definite essence is perceived, and consequently no definite mode of being,

<sup>17</sup> *Disp. Met.*, II, 6.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 2.

<sup>19</sup> "Assero omnia quae diximus de unitate conceptus entis longe clariora et certiora videri quam quod sit ens analogum.....sed si alterum negandum esset, potius analogia quae incerta est, quam unitas conceptus, quae certis rationibus videtur demonstrari, esset neganda." (*Disp. Met.*, II, 2.)

no definite relation to the "to be" is grasped. The mind merely perceives essence inasmuch as it is ordered to the "to be" (*id cuius actus est esse*). We abstract then from any *definite determination* of the relation of essence to the "to be." The relation which is perceived is *indefinite*. It is at once clear that such a concept must contain all beings (in whatever manner they may be considered, whether as beings only, or as such beings, *talia*), and that it must contain them *not* merely *potentially* but *actually*. For all beings designate an order to the "to be," and hence the notion of being is transcendental and not perfectly one.

2) **Predication.** When we come to the question of actual predication — the limiting of the initial concept in order to make it fit a definite essence — we discover that this limiting is not had from anything *without* the concept itself. All that is needed is to determine the nature of that particular transcendental relation to its "to be." To do this it is not necessary to search for any new data not found in the notion of "being." We say, for example, that God is being and that creature is being. In order to make the predicate "being" fit the subject, we are not required, as Scotus will have it, to add to the concept of "being" the mode of "aseity" and "abaleity" (which, if anything, must be "being"). Nor does it help to follow Suarez and add the concept of such (*tale*). For, in the first place, all these added differences, if they mean anything, must signify "being," which certainly is nothing new to the primary concept. What is more, such a composition would reduce being to the stature of a universal idea. Following St. Thomas, we add nothing to make the concept of being correspond to the concept of God or of creature, nothing that is not actually in the concept of "being." All that is necessary to make this concept correspond to the subject is *to determine the nature of the relation of the essence to the "to be."* In the first example, I conclude that God is being whose essence is its "to be," so that here a relation of identity is realized. In the second case, a real distinction between essence and the "to be" is perceived, as between potency and act, and with it the resulting

transcendental relation is connoted. What is predicated, then, is not the transcendental notion of being plus something else, but the very nature of the subject of the proposition is shown to have a definite exigency or proportion for "to be." It is clear that this application holds proportionately as we go down the hierarchy of being, even to the lowest inanimate individual substance. For in the case of corporeal beings, the essence will be seen to be composed of matter and form, hence a different relation to "to be" will be noted. Again, in the case of the corporeal individual, the relation to the "to be" will be perceived to be different because of the "this," namely, the individuation of the essence whose cause is its "signate" matter.

**Conclusions.** In this theory of the Thomists, which is nothing else than an application of the doctrine of act and potency, the concept of being is not had by a precision, either perfect or non-mutual, but by a natural abstraction which is called *abstraction of indefiniteness*, because it does not determine the nature of the relation of the essence to the mode of being. Secondly, the notion of being actually contains all beings, not merely in so far as they are beings (*qua entia*), but even in so far as they are such beings (*qua talia*). Thirdly, as a consequence of the indetermination of the transcendental relation it contains all beings only confusedly.

## SUMMARY

1. "Being" is transcendental and not a sublimated universal, because it is predicable even of the differences between being and being.
2. The transcendental notion of "being" is reduced to its inferiors (all beings) by a narrowing, a limiting of the concept from within. This limiting or narrowing is simply a determination of the relation between essence and "to be."
3. "Being" is not a genus, for genus contains its differences only potentially, whereas "being" contains them actually.
4. The ultimate reason for the foregoing statements is that the

abstraction of "being" is not of the universal but an abstraction of indefiniteness. In the abstraction of the universal, everything is dropped except the absolute nature; in the abstraction of indefiniteness nothing is dropped, but no determined relation of essence to the "to be" is perceived.

**N.B.** Consequently it cannot be said of the abstraction of being that it is either total or formal or both, for these do relinquish something.

## SECOND QUESTION: The Analogy of Being<sup>20</sup>

**The Problem.** It has been shown that the concept of "being" is made to readjust itself in order to fit the various subjects of predication. Each predication expresses being, but expresses it differently. Speaking technically, we say each predication expresses being analogously.

Analogy in common parlance is a relation (*habitus*) between objects which have something in common. A term, then, may be said to be used analogously of different individuals when the natures which it represents manifest a relation of similarity, but not of identity. In his *St. Thomas and Analogy*, Father Phelan explains this rather obscure and difficult idea clearly and succinctly.

Of course, no two things can be exactly the same from every point of view, else they would not be *two* things but one and the same thing. Likewise, no two things can be completely other from every point of view, else they could not be different *things*, for they are alike, at least, in that each is a thing. By an apparent paradox, only things which differ can be alike and only like things can differ. But likeness in difference extends over a wide range and conse-

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<sup>20</sup> Bibliography: Garrigou-Lagrange, *God*, II, p. 213 et sq.; Phelan, G. B., *St. Thomas and Analogy*; Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics*, p. 62; St. Thomas in *I Sent.*, dist. XIX, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1m.; *De Ver.*, q. 2, a. 11; *C.G.*, I, 34; *S. Th.*, I, 13, 5, 6; Penido, *Le rôle de l'analogie dans la théologie*; Marc, "L'idée thomiste de l'être," in *Revue Néo-scholastique*, 1933, p. 157 et sq.

quently may be regarded as analogous in every manner of way. Some things are very much alike and other things are extremely different. The degrees to which two or more things may resemble or differ from each other are practically limitless.<sup>21</sup>

Our present endeavor will be to analyze this concept of analogy, so essential in philosophy and theology, and to establish definitely the nature of the analogy found in the predication of "being."

To begin with, it will be helpful to call to mind the meaning of the terms "univocal," "equivocal," "analogous."

**Univocal.** The term "univocal" presents no difficulty. A univocal term is one predicable of many things according to precisely the same concept. Not only the spoken and written word, but the concept remains identical and signifies the same essence in its diverse predications. Such is every universal idea. We say that Peter is a man, and Paul is a man; and by "man" we understand exactly the same nature, rational animal. Our concept undergoes no change. Hence we predicate "man" of Peter and Paul and all other men in exactly the same sense.

**Equivocal.** "Equivocal" and "equivocation" are common terms in our language. An "equivocation" is the use of an ambiguous word; it is a play on words. It indicates the use of a word which has quite different meanings, so that although the oral or written term is identical, the concept, to be true, must change completely. Take for example the word "bark." It can signify the bark of a tree, or a boat, or the bark of a dog. Clearly, although in each instance the verbal term is identical, there is absolutely no connection between the concepts in the mind. We should note, therefore, that the concept or mental term itself cannot be equivocal. Now if the term "being" were equivocal, it would follow that when applied to God my concept, which is derived from created being, would have no truth whatever regarding the nature of God. Consequently, I would never be able to know anything about God, not even that

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<sup>21</sup> Reverend Gerald B. Phelan, *Sz. Thomas and Analogy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1941), p. 11.



He exists, because whatever I know of anything is apprehended precisely because it is being.

**Analogous.** The scholastics define an analogous concept as one which is *simply* (*simpliciter*) different, and *somewhat* (*secundum quid*) the same.<sup>22</sup> The subjects of analogous predication, or those things to which the analogous term is referred, are called "analogates." In the order of vision, for example, the eye, the human intellect, the angelic intellect, the divine intellect are the analogates. We distinguish between primary analogate and secondary analogates. The primary analogate is that to which the analogous term is principally referred. In the example we are using, the primary will be either the divine intellect or the bodily eye. It will be the divine intellect, provided we are considering the order of objective reality; or the bodily eye, provided we are considering the subjective order of human cognition.

**Attribution.** Analogy is the abstract term for analogous. We distinguish two classes of analogy: the analogy of *attribution* and of *proportionality*. The analogy of attribution is had, *when a term is attributed to diverse beings only because of the relation they have to the primary analogate, so that the nature signified by this term is found actually (intrinsically) only in the primary analogate.* This analogy is aptly called by St. Thomas: "*Secundum intentionem sed non secundum esse*"; that is, the mind sees the relation (*secundum intentionem*) of the secondary to the first

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<sup>22</sup> The terms *simpliciter* and *secundum quid* are important, and should be understood. *Simpliciter* means unqualifiedly the thing as it is in itself, as a whole, without any special point of view or limitation. For instance, the term vision is analogous when applied to vision in the eye, vision in the human intellect, angelic vision, divine vision. As they are in themselves, and without any limitation, they must be said to be *simply* different, for no one will claim that vision of the eye is "simply" the same as the vision of the intellect. *Secundum quid* on the contrary, means *qualifiedly* and indicates that a certain determination or restriction is made; in an analogy we say that the different concepts or natures are *secundum quid* similar, when the reason for this similarity or resemblance is stressed by a determination of some kind. In the example proposed, we can say that all these modes of vision are similar, in so far as they are means of true knowledge for each particular nature referred to. They are said, therefore, to be alike *secundum quid*.

analogate, but the perfection itself is not actually in the second analogate (*sed non secundum esse*).<sup>23</sup>

An example will help us clarify this difficult concept. We say of a man that he is healthy, of food that it is healthy (healthful, health-giving), of the ruddy glow of the cheek that this color is healthy (a manifestation of health). At once we note that the only reason for saying of the food that it is healthy, and of the color that it is healthy is that they can respectively cause the man to be healthy, or manifest that the man is healthy. We conclude that the only reason for the predication of health of the secondary analogates is because of their perceived relation to the first.

Let us now analyze the concept healthy, as it is being predicated of the various analogates. We said that here was an analogy; hence the concept of health should somehow vary in each predication. Now it is clear that what varies is not my idea of what healthy really means, that indeed remains unchanged. Rather it is in the different manner of predication, the different mode of attributing (analogy of attribution), that this idea (healthy) is variously affirmed of the objects considered. What must have changed, therefore, is not the meaning of "healthy," but the value of the verb "is." Obviously, in regard to the principal analogate, *scil.*, "Peter is healthy," the verb "is" must be taken in its unqualified sense. It signifies that the perfection health is actually, formally, and intrinsically in Peter. Not so in the secondary analogates. Indeed the predicate "healthy" is attributed to them merely because of the relation they have to the first analogate, and consequently when I say that this food is healthy, the verb "is" must be taken in causal sense, *scil.*, this food is a thing capable of causing or capable of preserving health. Likewise, when I say this color is healthy, I do not really mean that it has health, for only a living, corporeal substance can be said to possess health. What I actually want to indicate is that such a color is a thing manifesting health. Truly,

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<sup>23</sup> *In I Sent.*, XIX, 5, a. 2, ad 1m.

then, my idea of health has remained identical, and when I attribute it to the other analogates I merely affirm a relation which I find in them in regard to health in the principal analogate. The change, therefore, which must be found in every analogous predication of attribution, does not take place in the predicated perfection, the concept of whose nature remains always the same; rather, it is found in the whole predicate (including the verb), and is had by a modification of the meaning of the verb—a modification which effects a new determination in the mode of attribution. The significant words of St. Thomas, *secundum intentionem et non secundum esse*, are now clear. The mind predicates a certain perfection of the secondary analogates merely because of the relation which it sees (*secundum intentionem*) to the first analogate, and not because such perfection actually exists in them (*non secundum esse*).

Never, therefore, in this analogy of attribution could the predicated perfection exist (intrinsically) in the subject, since the only reason for such predication is *secundum intentionem*. On the contrary, in order that a concept be predicated analogously and *intrinsically* of different subjects, it is absolutely necessary that the change consist in a modification in the very concept of the perfection that is being predicated, and not in the mode of predication. For if, as we have clearly seen, the change is effected in the mode of predication, then patently the perfection could be predicated intrinsically only of the first analogate; for only with respect to the first analogate could the verb retain its absolute meaning. If this were not so, we should have univocal predication. Now we must admit that the concept of "being" is said not only intrinsically, but entitatively, of all reality. Moreover, it has been shown that such a concept is transcendental and cannot be merely a universal. Wherefore it necessarily follows that in its predication it will somehow have to be modified or changed, and that this modification or change will have to come not from the mode of predication but from the concept itself. We are thus brought to a consideration of another kind of analogy, called the analogy of proportionality.

**Proportionality.** The analogy of proportionality is had *when a term is intrinsically predicated of diverse subjects, because the perfection signified is found intrinsically in these subjects according to a certain proportional similitude*.<sup>24</sup> Let us study this analogy more thoroughly.

Whenever a concept is composite, that is, whenever it is constituted of several notes, as, for example, "rational animal" which is the concept of "man," a change in the concept can be effected by merely dropping one of the notes, or by dropping one of the notes and adding another and different note in its place. In the example of the concept "man" I can drop the note "rational" and replace it by the note "irrational," or not replace it at all. I can thus get three different concepts: "rational animal," "irrational animal," "animal." These concepts can be predicated intrinsically of various individuals; yet they also differ one from another. Can they, therefore, be called analogous? By no means; for in each one the concept "animal" remains the same; it is a universal idea. The other notes have nothing in common. There is no *analogy* in the mind (*secundum intentionem*), but only *univocity* (unity) of genus; and there is, of course, no *analogy* in the order of reality (*secundum esse*). Most certainly an analogy and most of all an intrinsic analogy cannot be had by changing one of the notes of the concept and keeping the other intact.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Authors generally distinguish between a metaphorical or "improper" and a "proper" analogy of proportionality. Philosophically, metaphorical analogy presents no difficulty. It is what we call a mere metaphor. We speak, for example, of a heart of stone, or we say that the flowers are smiling, or that the lion is the king of animals. It is obvious that those qualifications are not used in their proper sense, but that they merely remind us of the primary analogate. This sort of analogy is used frequently when speaking of God. (Cf. *S. Th.*, I, 13, a. 5 and 6.) Clearly the analogy of "being" is not merely metaphorical.

<sup>25</sup> A deduction from this argumentation is that a concept which is absolutely simple (if such be possible), that is, one which contains only one note, could be analogous only by an analogy of extrinsic attribution. For any change occurring in the actual predication could not take place without making it a completely different concept having nothing in common with the first; it would have to be in the mode of predication; since this would mean a modification of the verb, the signification "is" in an intrinsic sense could be used only once, that is, in the case of the

The only other possibility for a change in the concept occurs whenever we find a "proportional similitude" in the concept of the perfection which is being predicated. Perhaps this fact can be made clear by illustration. *Life* is certainly an analogous concept: God is life; angels enjoy the life of pure intellects untrammelled by matter; man has the sort of life that is both spiritual and material; animals feel; plants vegetate. In all these, life is, to be sure, an intrinsic reality; yet it differs widely as we have indicated. *Life* as predicated of God differs widely from life as predicated of angel or man, or animal or plant. And the reason why it differs in each instance is assuredly not that life is a genus, for what specific differences could there be that would not also be something living? Rather, the concept of life as applied to all these beings manifests a proportion between two notes in the concept of this perfection; and this proportion must vary in accordance with the nature of each individual or class of individuals, and still retain the same fundamental definition, so that life in all these may be said to be simply (*simpliciter*) different, and somehow (*secundum quid*) the same. The following may serve as a diagram of this proportion.

<i>Life</i>		<i>Life</i>		<i>Life</i>		
is to the	as	is to the	as	is to the	etc.	
<i>Nature of God</i>		<i>Nature of an Angel</i>		<i>Nature of Man</i>		

Certainly there is proportional similarity in these concepts.<sup>26</sup> That this proportion does not postulate identity of concept is evident. In God, of course, the proportion is of identity. With the angels, on the contrary, because of the real distinction between their essence and the "to be," the proportion is quite different; and man whose essence is a composite of spiritual form with matter must have the grade of life demanded by such a nature. In this manner

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primary analogate. If the verb were not modified, the predication would be strictly univocal. Consequently, it is absolutely necessary that the concept of being should be a composite of at least two notes, namely, potency and act (essence and the "to be").

<sup>26</sup> There is no question here of mathematical proportion, which supposes perfect ratios and postulates equality, but of proportional similitude, which allows inequality.

we could follow the analogy throughout the hierarchy of living beings, down to the last individual of the lowest species of plants.

An immediate deduction is that every analogy of proportionality must suppose the theory of act and potency (and especially the first application of this theory—namely, the real distinction between essence and the “to be”) for its foundation. Furthermore, since the analogy of being is that of proportionality, and the similarity of proportion is had because of the diverse relation to the “to be” (*habitus ad esse*) which every essence must indicate, the concept of being is predicated intrinsically of all objects. Necessarily, therefore, must this analogy be of proportionality in its most fundamental sense. The terms of the proportion are potency and act in the order of the “to be,” or essence and “to be”; for “being” is that whose act is “to be”; it is that to which is due the “to be.” Such is the predication of “being.” The diverse relation to the “to be” makes the univocal predication of being impossible.<sup>27</sup>

“To be”		“To be”		“To be”		“To be”	etc.
is to the	as	is to the	as	is to the	as	is to the	
Essence of		Essence of		Essence of		Essence of	
God		an Angel		Man		Peter	

God is His “to be” (*Ipsium esse subsistens*), the proportion here is of identity. An angel is not his “to be” but has a “to be” proportionate to his nature of pure spirit. Man has an essence composed of matter and form, and his “to be” must correspond to this essence to be able to actuate it. Even Peter, or, for that matter, any individual, has an individual nature all his own and a “to be” to fit it.<sup>28</sup>

**Relation to the First Analogate.** One more point remains to be made clear. We remarked above that every analogy indicates relation or order to the first analogate. In the discussion we understood

<sup>27</sup> “*Diversa enim habitudo ad esse impedit univocam predicationem entis.*” *De Pot.*, VII, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *God*, II, p. 207 sq. Translated by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. (London: Herder, 1939).

why the concept of "being" is predicated intrinsically and analogously by means of a similitude of proportions.<sup>29</sup> Now we should like to know how, when "being" is predicated of the secondary analogates, the relation to the first analogate becomes known. St. Thomas answers this question for us with the following enlightening remark. "The relation to the cause," he says, "does not enter into the definition of a being that has been caused (*Habitudo ad causam non intrat in definitione entis causati*).<sup>30</sup> How then does this secondary analogate (*ens causatum*) manifest this order (*habitus*) to the primary analogate (God)? "This relation," Thomas explains, "becomes known by an analysis of the secondary analogate (*consequitur ad ea quae sunt de eius ratione*).<sup>31</sup> And how does this analysis give a knowledge of this *habitus*? "Because," he continues, "from the knowledge that the secondary analogate 'is' only by participation, namely, that it is not its own 'to be,' it follows necessarily that it must be caused by another."<sup>32</sup> The ultimate reason for the relation of the secondary analogate to the first in the analogy of proportionality is and must always be its dependence upon a supreme cause. This fact, however, is not the reason for my predication as in the analogy of attribution, but it is realized because the real distinction between essence and "to be" is perceived by the mind. The reason for this relation is precisely the fact that the proportion indicates a real relation between the two terms of the concepts. It indicates a real distinction; it indicates limitation and, consequently, participation. But limitation and participation, as we shall show in the treatise on Causes, imply dependence upon the one who is this perfection by essence (*per essentiam*). Hence, only a pure act, one, namely, whose essence is its "to be," can be the first analogate in the analogy of proportionality.

<sup>29</sup> In the case of the analogy of "being," or for that matter in the case of every analogy of proportionality, the first analogate is and must be God, for only in God must every perfection be identified with the essence.

<sup>30</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 44, 1, ad 1m. "*Quia ex hoc quod aliquid per participationem est ens, sequitur quod sit causatum ab alio.*"

We have already remarked that while the complete theory of the analogy of "being" was evolved by Cajetan, nevertheless, we find in Thomas all the necessary texts for a true and solid foundation of this doctrine. This is true especially of those texts wherein he explains the question of participation. Indeed, the *Fourth Way* (*quarta via*) for the proof of the existence of God is the most perfect application of this analogy. As a result, we may say that just as act and potency is the *leitmotiv* of *Thomism*, and the real distinction its key, so the analogy of proportionality which flows from them is the foundation of the natural theology of St. Thomas.<sup>31</sup>

We now see clearly the solution of our problem. Our concept of being is not an imagination which in no way corresponds with reality. On the contrary, because it embraces act and potency, essence and existence, it can represent fundamentally any being whether God or creature, spirit or matter, substance or accident.

### THE PROOF

After our lengthy discussion, the proof can be proposed briefly: "Being" is predicated either equivocally, univocally, or analogously of all reality. But it cannot be predicated equivocally or univocally. Therefore, it must be predicated analogously.

The disjunction is complete. That "being" (the term, not the

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<sup>31</sup> The texts indicating the truth of this statement are many. In fact, one can scarcely read several paragraphs in St. Thomas without meeting some direct references to these three great truths: the limitation of act by potency, the real distinction, the analogy of proportionality. It will suffice to quote two: a) "... the finite and the infinite, though they cannot be in a strict proportion, do admit of a proportionality. For infinite is equal to infinite as finite is to finite. And in this way there is a similarity between a creature and God. For just as there is a relation between God and all that belongs to Him, so is there between the creature and all that belongs to it." "... *finitum et infinitum quamvis non possint esse proportionata, possunt tamen esse proportionabilia; quia sicut infinitum est aequale infinito, ita finitum finito; et per hunc modum est similitudo inter creaturam et Deum, quia sicut se habet ad ea quae ei competunt, ita creatura ad sua propria.*" (*De Ver.*, XXIII, 7, ad 9m.) b) "Any perfection which any being participates in is necessarily caused by that being to whom it belongs by his very essence." "*Si aliquid invenitur in aliquo per participationem, necesse est quod causetur in ipso ab eo cui essentialiter convenit.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 44, 1.)



concept) cannot be predicated equivocally is manifest, since we mean something definite and not a mere word when we say that Peter is being, that God is being. Moreover, the concept, which manifests a "relation to 'to be,'" is commonly said of all beings. Nor is it a univocal predication since the relation to the "to be" must vary in accordance with the nature of the essence.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, we must conclude that "being" is predicated analogously of all reality.

Secondly, we wish to prove that the analogy of being is that of proportionality. Indeed, we might truly say that the analogy of proportionality is derived from the concept of being, since being is that whose act is "to be" and cannot be conceived without a proportion of essence to the "to be." But a property of this proportion is that it remain similar even though the terms change with every predication. Therefore, the analogy of being is that of proportionality.<sup>33</sup>

This is also evident from the very definition of this analogy. The analogy of proportionality is had whenever the same term is predicated of many, because we find in them (intrinsically) a perfection that is similar, though not identical, and according to a proportion. But the perfection of being is found to be similar in them (intrinsically), and according to a given proportion.

The major premise is our definition. The minor is evident. In the first place, there is nothing more intrinsic to any reality than the fact that it is being, for being means an essence that is ordered to a "to be." But nothing could be more intrinsic to an object than its

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<sup>32</sup> "The diverse relation to the 'to be' makes a univocal predication of being impossible. In God the relation to the 'to be' is different from that of any creature; for God is His 'to be'; and that cannot be said of any creature. And hence, it is impossible that being be predicated univocally of God and the creature." "*Diversa enim habitudo ad esse impedit univocam praedicationem entis. Deus autem alio modo se habet ad esse, quam aliqua creatura; nam ipse est suum esse quod nulli creaturae competit. Unde ens nullo modo univoce de Deo et creatura dicitur.*" (*De Pot.*, VII, 7; cf. *C.G.*, I, 32.)

<sup>33</sup> Vide *De Ver.*, XXIII, 7, ad 9m, quoted above.

own essence. Secondly, we say that the perfection is similar, not identical, for each essence indicates a different relation to the "to be." Finally, we say "according to a given proportion"; that is, there is a definite proportion between the essence and the "to be" of each being. The "to be" of a dog could never actuate the essence of man, for it is not proportionate to such an essence but to that of a dog. Hence, I must say that God's essence is to His "to be" as man's essence is to his "to be."

### SCHOLION I: The Analogy of Intrinsic Attribution

In order to solve the problem of the predication of being, Suarez affirmed that the concept of being is analogous. In his doctrine, however, as was noted, because of the denial of the real distinction between essence and existence, the abstraction of being was had by means of a precision. Consequently the analogy of proportionality, based as it is on the real distinction, could not be acceptable to him. Moreover, the analogy of attribution, as it is generally understood, postulates only extrinsic predication with the secondary analogates. It remained, therefore, for Suarez to evolve a new analogy which he calls the analogy of intrinsic attribution.<sup>34</sup> It is not always perfectly clear just what the true signification of this theory may be. Indeed, we find the most faithful disciples of the *Doctor Eximius* disagreeing in their interpretation. The traditional school,<sup>35</sup> Pesch, Delmas, Urraburu, insists that this analogy is based on the fact that the concept of being contains all inferiors actually *qua entia*, but not *qua talia*. How such an analogy as intrinsic attribution can flow from the indicated precision of "being" is not explained. We confess our inability to see how the predication of such a concept could be anything but univocal, especially since "being" in this theory is absolutely simple, and consequently, this one note which signifies "being" (it has to be at least a note to be in-

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Disp. Met.*, disp. II, sect. 1, 2; XXVIII, sect. 3; XXX, sect. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Pesch-Frick, II, p. 34 et sq.

telligible, we cannot conceive nothing), could never change and would have to be predicated univocally.

Father Descoqs, probably the most important of the modern interpreters of Suarez, does not admit the above-mentioned explanation. According to him, the concept of "being" does not contain the inferiors, not even *qua entia*. The analogy of "being," he says, is had by means of a similitude which he calls simple.<sup>36</sup> Here again it is difficult to understand how this concept of "being" which abstracts so perfectly from all reality could be anything but a universal and univocal concept, that is, supposing that it could be at all conceived.

## SCHOLION II: The Principle of Contradiction

"Forasmuch as nature is ever directed to one thing, it follows that of one power there is generally one object; for instance, color is the object of sight, sound of hearing. Wherefore the intellect, since it is one power, has one natural object of which it has knowledge *per se* and naturally. And this object must be that under which are comprised all things known by the intellect; just as under color are comprised all colors, which are *per se* visible. Now this is no other than *being*. Therefore, our intellect knows being naturally, and whatever is *per se* comprised under being as such; and on this knowledge is based the knowledge of *first principles*, such as the *incompatibility of affirmation and negation*,<sup>37</sup> and the like. Consequently, these *principles* alone are known naturally by our intellect; while conclusions are known through them: even as through color the sight knows both common and accidental sensibles."<sup>38</sup>

**Principle.** According to Aristotle, a principle is something that is

<sup>36</sup> Descoqs, *Institutiones Metaphysicae*, pp. 188, 220 sq.

<sup>37</sup> The original reads "*ut non esse simul affirmare et negare*." Perhaps a clearer translation would be "incompatibility of simultaneous affirmation and negation."

<sup>38</sup> II, C.G., c. 83.

first (*aliquod primum*) from which something either is or becomes or is known.<sup>39</sup>

**Division.** When we speak of principles we should carefully distinguish between the order of cognition and the ontological order, i.e., the order of knowledge and the order of reality. Again in the ontological order we should be careful to note the distinction between the extrinsic order of efficient causality and the intrinsic, or constitutive, order of being and becoming. In the order of efficient causality, God, the Pure Act, is the first principle. Act and potency, as we have seen, are the constitutive principles of limited being, and may be called first principles in that order. Finally, in the order of knowledge, the principle of contradiction, which is the directive norm for all correct thinking, is the supreme principle. After having proved in the preceding tract the objective truth of our concept of being, we may here add a few words to show that this principle, which is in the same order of knowledge as the concept of being, flows immediately from a consideration of this concept, and, consequently, is analytical and absolutely certain and first.

**Complex and Incomplex Principles.** Since the act of the human intellect is *twofold*, namely, the *apprehension of natures* (simple apprehension), and the affirmation of the "to be" (judgment), we should, in considering the principles of cognition, distinguish between *complex* and *incomplex* principles. It is evident that "being" is absolutely the first of all complex as well as incomplex principles, for it is the source of all concepts, and all things are intelligible precisely because they are "being." Having then conceived "being," we enunciate our first judgment from a mere consideration of being and say: "Being is being, and being is not non-being." This principle, which cannot be demonstrated, is the first principle of philosophy and the foundation of all the sciences. St. Thomas clearly expresses this thought in the *Summa*, Ia IIae, 94, 2, when he

<sup>39</sup> πασῶν μὲν οὖν κοινὸν τῶν ἀρχῶν, τὸ πρῶτον εἶναι, ὅθεν ἡ ἔστιν, ἡ γίνεται, ἡ γιγνώσκεται. *Met.*, IV, c. 1; 1013, a17.

says: "That which before aught else falls under apprehension is *being*, the notion of which is included in all things whatsoever a man apprehends. Wherefore, the first indemonstrable principle is that *the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time*, which is based on the notion of *being* and *non-being*, and on this principle all others are based."

The principle of contradiction can be expressed in different ways. "Being is not non-being" is the classical form, but by no means the only one in common use. In the Fourth Book of his *Metaphysics*, Chapter III, Aristotle declares: "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not be the same thing, and from the same point of view." St. Thomas, as quoted above, says that "the same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time." A more popular form of this is: "The same thing cannot be and not be at the same time."

**Opinions.** Besides the principle of contradiction, the more recent authors<sup>40</sup> propose two other primary principles, namely the principle of *identity* and that of excluded middle. The principle of identity is expressed thus: "being is being," or "what is, is; and what is not is not." The principle of excluded middle says: "There is no intermediary between to be and not to be."<sup>41</sup> The question is: Which one of these three principles is absolutely the first in the order of knowledge?

Father De Raeymaecker in his excellent *Metaphysica Generalis* (p. 101) distinguishes carefully between the psychological order, that is, the order in which we acquire cognition, and the practical order, the order in which we consider a given principle as a norm of intellection. Regarding the psychological order, he states that the principle of identity is absolutely first, because that which is apprehended first is "being" and not "non-being." In the practical

<sup>40</sup> Cf. De Raeymaecker, *op. cit.*, p. 98 seq.

<sup>41</sup> We grant that a medium is had between being (*ens quod*) and non-being (nothing), namely a principle of being (*ens quo*). What we do deny is that between being (either *ens quod* or *ens quo*) and non-being (nothing) there can be found a medium.

order, however, since no demonstration is clearer than that which is called *per reductionem ad absurdum*, the principle of contradiction must be considered as the first.

While we have no real difficulty in accepting this distinction, it seems to us a subtlety of little value. We judge it clearer and truer to say that both the principle of identity and of excluded middle are merely different expressions of the principle of contradiction. As a matter of fact, Thomas and Aristotle affirm without distinction that the principle of contradiction is the first in the order of knowledge.

Whether Heraclitus (whatever Aristotle may have claimed) actually and absolutely denied the principle of contradiction is not altogether clear. The modern Relativists, the Idealists, and Hegel himself, while admitting the value of this principle as a law of thought, reject it as a law of "being."

**The Proof.** That the principle of contradiction is an analytical principle may readily be shown. An analytical principle, or, for that matter, an analytical proposition is had when the fact that the predicate is of the very essence of the subject is made manifest to us by a mere analysis of the terms. Take, for instance, the proposition "man is an animal." By analyzing the subject "man," we get "rational animal," and become aware that the proposition is true. Now this is clearly the case with the principle of contradiction: "being is not non-being," because a denial of "non-being" adds nothing to the concept of "being." We conclude, therefore, that this principle is analytical.<sup>42</sup>

Secondly, we affirm that the principle of contradiction is absolutely certain. This is evident from the fact that it is an analytical proposition whose predicate is of the essence of the subject. Moreover, the principle of contradiction expresses only the nature of "being." But nothing can be known except "being"; therefore, nothing can be said to be certain except in so far as it is "being," for we can be certain only of what we know.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Post. Analyt.*, I, 10.

Thirdly, we insist that the principle of contradiction is absolutely the first complex principle in the order of knowledge. This has been made clear in our previous discussion. For the other two principles mentioned, namely, the principle of identity and the principle of excluded middle are only, we believe, different expressions of the same principle of contradiction.

## APPENDIX

### FIRST QUESTION: The Problem of the Possible<sup>43</sup>

The problem of the possible in its highest aspect is the problem of the existence of God; it is the problem of God. For a possible is that which can exist. Now the ultimate cause for the possibility of the actuation of an essence in the order of existence, as well as the most profound reason, or foundation for its intelligibility, can only be God, the Pure Act, the source of all intelligibility, and the sole cause of all existence. St. Thomas has proposed this doctrine succinctly and beautifully in the first part of his immortal *Summa Theologica*, q. 25, a. 3. The strange errors which rose in the centuries that followed could have been easily avoided, had the exposition of the Angelic Doctor been earnestly studied and properly understood.

**Extrinsic Possibility.** A possible is that which can be, but is not, or at least is not considered in its objective reality in the order of existence. More exactly, it is that which indicates a relation to the "to be." From this definition two aspects of the possible may be studied. In the first place, the fact that a possible manifests an order,

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<sup>43</sup> Some of the later scholastics designate possibility as an "objective potency." By this they mean a potency that is seen by the mind, a logical potency. They use the expression "objective potency" to distinguish it from a "subjective potency"; but the expression is misleading, and may give rise to confusion in our concepts. The possible, as such, is in the intellectual order, the order of the mind; it is the concept of an essence that can be actualized; "the subjective potency," on the contrary, is not a thought but a constituent of existing being, a "principle by which" (*principium quo*), an objective reality.

a relation to existence plainly shows that it is not of its essence to exist, and therefore that it needs an extrinsic, efficient cause to be put in act. *This dependence upon an efficient cause* philosophers call *extrinsic possibility*. And incidentally we note that, in the last analysis, since we are speaking of an actuation in the order of "to be," only God, the *Ipsum Esse*, can be a sufficient cause. Consequently, when we indicate the extrinsic possibility of any essence, we implicitly assert that there is a sufficient cause, God, who has supreme dominion over "being" precisely because He, and He alone, is "to be." "The divine 'to be,'" St. Thomas informs us, "upon which the nature of the power of God is founded is infinite, and is not limited to any genus of being, but possesses within itself the perfection of all being. Whence, whatsoever has or can have the nature of being, is numbered among the absolutely possible things, in respect to which God is called omnipotent."<sup>44</sup>

But, on the other hand, could this extrinsic possibility, could the fact that God is the all-powerful suffice to explain why a given essence considered in itself is ordered to a "to be"? Is the will of God, or the omnipotence of the Almighty the ultimate reason why, for example, two and two must make four; and could it be, if God chose to establish a different order, that in such a world two and two might make five? Let us put our query in philosophical language: Are the essences of things *eternal, immutable, in themselves and independently of God's will*?

William of Occam and René Descartes did not think so. In his sixth *Epistle*, Descartes explains that he "would never dare affirm that God could not so will (and consequently effect) that two plus one might not make three." Such a statement, if it were true, would be the denial of all objective reality, of all philosophy, of all thought, of all certitude. For it is the denial of "being."

How different are the words of the Angelic Doctor:

Now nothing is opposed to the idea of being except non-being. Therefore, that which implies being and non-being at the same time

<sup>44</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 25, 3c.



is repugnant to the idea of an absolutely possible thing, within the scope of divine omnipotence. For such cannot come under the divine omnipotence, not because of any defect in the power of God, but because it has not the nature of a feasible or a possible thing. Therefore, everything that does not imply a contradiction in terms is numbered among those possible things, in respect of which God is called omnipotent: whereas whatever implies contradiction does not come within the scope of divine omnipotence, because it cannot have the aspect of possibility. Hence it is better to say that such things cannot be done, than that God cannot do them.<sup>45</sup>

**Intrinsic Possibility.** The ultimate reason, therefore, why a being is intrinsically possible is not that God wants it to be possible, or that God is able to actuate it in the order of existence, but simply because *its nature does not imply a contradiction*, and consequently that nature is ordered to a "to be." Now the norm for knowing whether a nature implies a contradiction or not is the intellect, whose function it is to grasp and understand the intelligibility of any essence. If this particular nature is found to be intelligible, then it is possible, it can be; for only being is intelligible, and only being is that whose act is "to be." But when the concept of a nature expresses a contradiction, that is a non-being,<sup>46</sup> we must affirm, not that God is not powerful enough, for it is not a sign of omnipotence to be able to do the impossible, but rather that these so-called "things" are not "things," and are therefore nothing. Hence the question: Can God do that which implies a contradiction? is a question devoid of all meaning. So important is it for us to understand this truth that we repeat the words of St. Thomas: "Therefore, everything that does not imply a contradiction in terms is numbered among those possible things in respect of which God is called omnipotent; whereas whatever implies contradiction does not come within the scope of divine omnipotence, because it cannot have the aspect of possibility."

<sup>45</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> It is not a mere matter of lack of understanding due to the weakness of our intellect (*debilitas intellectus humani*), but of definitely and positively seeing the contradiction, that is the opposition and mutual positive exclusion of the notes as, for example, a square circle.

Hence it is better to say *that such things cannot be done, than that God cannot do them.*"<sup>47</sup>

This links up with our theory of the limitation of act by potency and the absolute necessity that God, the extrinsic efficient cause, must create, if He does so, according to the intrinsic possibility of an essence. If this essence should call for an intrinsic potential and limiting principle, then no matter how omnipotent, or rather simply because he is omnipotent, God must "concreate" this all-necessary principle.

**N.B.:** Finally, after determining the meaning of "possible," and the nature of intrinsic and extrinsic possibility, we may consider a problem which has caused a great deal of discussion. For us, indeed, who have understood the different orders of reality, this problem may seem extremely curious. It is this: Where are the possibles? Are they somewhere in the stratosphere flying about, waiting for the time when God will finally decide to create them? Or are they simply nothing, *non-ens*, and consequently nowhere? One is astounded at the extraordinary answers that have been concocted to solve these rather ridiculous questions.

## OPINIONS

Some philosophers (among them we find such important names as Henry of Ghent and Capreolus) thought that the possibles have some sort of "to be" — not, of course, the "to be" of existence, but the "to be" of essence, whatever that may mean. As a consequence, they maintain that the possibles are realities outside of the divine essence. Suarez refutes this doctrine with great vigor.<sup>48</sup> Besides this theory, there is another similar one which was proposed by some of the less important philosophers of the Scotistic school. These authors insist that the possible essences have a strange mode of existence which is less than real and more than logical. Finally, a few of the eighteenth century Deists assert that, since at least

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<sup>47</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 25, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Suarez, *Disp. Met.*, disp. XXXI, sec. II.

some of the possibles will never exist, they are impossibles and hence nothing.

**Proof.** Now it is clear that the possibles are not "nothing," for "nothing" is not intelligible, and can be conceived only as a denial of "being." The possibles, however, are conceivable and therefore intelligible. They are, moreover, distinguishable one from another: a possible elephant is certainly not the same as a possible man. But "nothing" is not distinguishable from "nothing." Besides, "nothing" cannot exist, but the possibles can be actuated. Therefore, they are not "nothing."

It is well to note that the doctrine of Henry of Ghent is contrary to all sound philosophical principles. In the first place, an essence that is actuated without an act of existence is a plain contradiction. Moreover, such an assertion would do away with the concept of creation, for from all eternity the possibles would be actualities, realities outside the divine intellect, actuated, no matter how imperfectly, in the order of "to be." For all practical purposes the same may be said of the opinions of those members of the Scotistic school whom we have mentioned.

From our previous discussion we have understood that the possibles in their formal realization, that is, in so far as they are realities, belong to the intellectual order. They are mere concepts in the divine intellect. From all eternity God contemplating His essence, which is the actuality of all perfection, sees the possibility of limited imitations of that supreme perfection. Thus, from all eternity He conceives the possible essences; consequently, these essences are said to be eternal, immutable, and necessary. The formal realization of the possibles, then, is in the divine intellect. The foundation, however, for this cognition is the essence of God as imitable, for the essence of God is the source of all reality, of all possibles, of all beings.

**SECOND QUESTION: Being of Reason**

**Definition.** We may fittingly close our treatise on "being" with a few remarks on a very curious brand of beings, called "beings of reason." "There are two kinds of being," says St. Thomas, "namely, being of reason and being of nature."<sup>49</sup> "Being of reason" can never exist "in nature," but only in the mind. It is an idea, and, therefore, it is conceived as if it were a nature (*sub ratione entis*). But, in itself, it has no reality, no intrinsic possibility, no order or relation to a real "to be." An example will help clarify this. I am able to conceive and to talk about a hole in a wall, a hole in a doughnut as if this hole were something real. As a matter of fact the hole is merely a lack of wall, or a lack of doughnut.

Suarez defines "being of reason" as "something that has an objective 'to be' only in the mind." "It is not being in nature," asserts St. Thomas, "but being in the mind."<sup>50</sup>

**Division.** A being of reason can be considered as something positive or negative. If negative, it is called either a "negation" or "privation." A "negation" is the denial of a perfection in a being whose nature has no aptitude or need for such a perfection. The fact, for instance, that a man has no wings, is a mere negation. A "privation" indicates a little more: it is the lack of a perfection for which the subject has real capacity (potency), perhaps a real need, as, for example, blindness in a man is lack of sight for which man has a real capacity.

If, however, "being of reason" is considered as something positive, it is called a "relation of reason"; for only a "relation," as we shall see later, can indicate something positive even when that something has no objective reality. And the reason is that the essence of a "relation" is "order to" (*esse ad*); and this "order to" must be considered by the mind as something positive, even when it is not something outside the mind. "We may consider," explains the

<sup>49</sup> In IV *Met.*, lect. 4, 574. Cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, c. I.

<sup>50</sup> S. *Th.*, I, 16, 3, ad 1; Ia-IIae, 8, 1.

Angelic Doctor, "that in relations alone is found something which is only in the apprehension and not in reality. This is not found in any other genus; forasmuch as other genera, as quantity and quality, in their strict and proper meaning signify something inherent in a subject. But relation in its own proper meaning signifies only what refers to another."<sup>51</sup> There are, however, two kinds of relations of reason. For instance, we may speak of the right and left of a column. Now this is undoubtedly only a relation of reason, for the column has neither right nor left, but we conceive an "order to," a relation, in reference to the position of one facing the column.

Such concepts are evidently not erroneous, since we can find a foundation for them in the object. In the first place, it is clear that the reality of the object which lacks a perfection, whether that perfection be due or not, is a sufficient foundation for my concept of "privation" and "negation." The reason for a "relation of reason," however, is a more subtle one. It is found primarily in the weakness of the human intellect, which, in its effort to understand "being" in all its various aspects, needs to establish diverse "orders to" and the relations of reason in order to acquire a more complete knowledge of the object.

Besides these relations just mentioned, there is another sort of relation of reason which is the object of Logic. It is generally called "second intention." The second intention is a certain relation which the mind places between natures which have been conceived, and in so far as they are understood, that is, in so far as they are in the mind. In other words, the relation is not understood to be between the concept and the object (*res naturae*), but between two or more *concepts* of natures. For example, the nature of animal *as conceived* is understood to be related as a genus to the nature of man and beast *as conceived*. These relations are "beings of reason" in the strictest sense. The words of St. Thomas are extremely helpful to an understanding of this difficult relation: "Being of reason is

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<sup>51</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 28, 1.

properly said of those intentions, which the mind finds in the *natures it has considered*, as, for instance the intention of genus, species, and the like, which are not found in the things of nature but follow the consideration of reason. And such a being of reason is properly the subject of Logic."<sup>52</sup>

Finally, we should not imagine that these beings of reason are nothing: There is no such concept as "nothing" as such. "Nothing" is not intelligible, and consequently cannot be conceived except by a mere opposition to "being." The object of the intellect is "being," and whatever is conceivable must have something of "being." Now these "beings of reason" are not absolute negations, even those that are said to be "non-positive," as privation and "negation," for even they are conceived as something *sub ratione entis* because they have a foundation in "being."

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<sup>52</sup> *In IV Met.*, lect. 4, 574.

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## SECTION III

### THE CAUSES

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#### PROLOGUE

"Though relation to the cause (*habitus ad causam*) is not part of the definition of a thing caused," explains St. Thomas, "still it follows, as a consequence, on what belongs to its constitutive makeup (*Consequitur ad ea quae sunt de eius ratione*); because from the fact that a thing is 'being' by participation it follows that it is caused."<sup>1</sup>

**Summary of Preceding Chapters.** Our philosophical investigation began with the problem of "being," which is "one and many." We sought, in the first place, to face this problem as we found it in the realm of existence. Our arduous search brought us to an understanding of the structure of "being" whether unique, "Pure Act," or manifold, composed of "act and potency." Our study of the intrinsic composition of limited finite being in the various orders of reality gave us a profound insight into the real; and we were thus enabled to indicate, throughout the orderly hierarchy of being, the fundamental reasons for the similarity and the differences among beings. The problem of "being" in its broader aspect was solved by an understanding of its structure. All reality was found to be either: Pure Act, God the Supreme Perfection, the Subsisting "to be"; or limited "being," a composite of act and potency in the three respective orders of existence, essence, and activity.

We then asked the further questions: Does my concept of "being" correspond with objective reality? Or is my concept of "being" which is the fundamental concept of all reality, identical in its various predications of different objects? Certainly objects differ one from another, and hence my concept to be true must vary accordingly. We discovered after lengthy discussions that my con-

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<sup>1</sup> S. Th., I, q. 44, a. 1, ad 1m.

cept of "being" does vary in its actual predication. We also discovered that because the abstraction of "being" is an abstraction of indefiniteness, the concept of "being" must be called *transcendental*.

In short, we saw that in the notion of "being" there is an indetermination of the relation between essence and "to be," and that in the very act of predication this relation is determined from within the concept in order to fit the subject of predication. Hence the concept of "being" is analogous, and its analogy is that of proper proportionality.

**Analysis of Contingent Being.** As we meditated upon this illuminating knowledge of "being" and of beings, one great truth was brought into focus. It is expressed by the pregnant text quoted at the beginning of the section. "From the fact that a thing is being by participation it follows that it is caused." In other words, in predicating the concept "being" of a limited subject, I must affirm, not a relation of identity between essence and "to be," but a real relation, and therefore, a real distinction. For since this subject is "being by participation," it is not its "to be," but *has* a "to be." Consequently, it is not a necessary being; there is no reason in the concept of the essence why it should exist. But it does exist. Why? If the reason for the existence of this being is not found to be of the very essence, then I must look outside that essence for a principle of being. I conclude, therefore, that an existing limited and finite being is not sufficiently explained by its intrinsic structure, by the composition of act and potency. There must be other principles—extrinsic principles, to be sure, indicating not why these limited beings are such and why they are different from one another (for that is sufficiently explained by essence and "to be," matter and form, substance and accident), but simply *why* they *are*. Thus we are brought to the question of cause and of causality.



## CHAPTER ONE

### EFFICIENT CAUSALITY

#### FIRST QUESTION: Why the Efficient Cause?

There are various approaches to the problem of the efficient cause: the physical, psychological, and the purely metaphysical. We prefer to study this question in its highest aspect, and, therefore we elect the purely metaphysical approach. Our reason for doing so is that only by this approach can the question be solved completely and satisfactorily. Why then, we ask, does a limited, a composite being exist? Why does it actually change?<sup>2</sup> We have already suggested the answer. Existence and change in a composite being are ultimately explained because of an extrinsic principle which we shall call the "agent" or the "efficient cause." In this treatise we shall consider the absolute necessity of postulating such a cause in order to explain in finite beings, first, their actual existence or their intrinsic composition, and, second, the changes that actually take place.

Why Do Finite Beings Exist? Why does existence come to a finite essence? In answering this question we can do no better than recall a most important text from the *De Ente et Essentia*, to which we referred when discussing the question of the real distinction. Having stated the principle that whatever is not contained in the concept of essence must come from without, and, moreover, that

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<sup>2</sup> Note that we put this question only in regard to finite beings. The reason is obvious. God is Pure Act; consequently the sufficient reason for the existence of His essence is the essence itself, for it (the essence) is the "to be."

in all beings except God the "to be" is not contained in the concept of their finite essences, St. Thomas concludes: "Consequently, it follows that in all other beings [except God] the 'to be' and the quiddity are distinct." This settled, he attacks the problem of causality from the point of view of existence.

Whatever belongs to a being is either caused by the principles of that being's essence or comes to it from some extrinsic principle. . . . The "to be" [in a finite being] cannot be caused by the thing in itself considered formally or in its essence. Here I speak of cause in the sense of efficient cause, for in this case, the being would be its own cause, it would give itself its own "to be," a thing which is impossible. Hence, every being whose "to be" is different from its essence, receives this "to be" from another.<sup>3</sup>

St. Thomas here declares that since the "to be" of finite beings is distinct from the essence, it cannot be caused by the essence. For nothing that is caused can be its own cause. Therefore, an extrinsic principle, which is what we mean by an efficient cause, must be the sole reason for the actuation of a finite being in the order of existence.

**Existence of a Supreme Cause.** This argument which begins with the real distinction and proceeds from an analysis of the composite "being" to conclude almost immediately to the existence of an efficient cause, must, like all arguments based on the analogy of proportionality, terminate in a proof of the existence of the Supreme Cause. St. Thomas never misses an opportunity of this kind to affirm the existence of the "Subsisting 'to be.'" "And since," he continues, "everything that exists because of another [that is, by reason of another as efficient cause] is brought back to that which

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<sup>3</sup> "*Omne autem quod convenit alicui, vel est causatum ex principiis naturae suae . . . vel advenit ex principio extrinseco. . . . Non autem potest esse quod ipsum esse [the 'to be'] sit causatum ab ipsa forma rei vel quidditate. Dico autem causatum sicut a causa efficiente, quia sic aliqua res esset sui ipsius causa, et aliqua res seipsam in esse produceret: quod est impossibile. Ergo oportet quod omnis talis res, cuius esse est aliud quam sua natura, habeat esse ab alio.*" (*De Ente et Essentia*, c. V.) Another important text expressing the same argument in almost identical terms will be found in the *Summa Theologica*, I, 3, 4.

exists by reason of itself as to the first cause, some being must exist which is the cause of the 'to be' in all things, because in itself it is pure 'to be.' Otherwise we fall into an infinite series of causes, *since every being which is not pure 'to be,' has a cause of its 'to be.'* And this is the first cause, which is God."<sup>4</sup>

**Every Composite Being Must Have a Cause.** The same argument can be proposed from the fact of any composition in beings. A composite being, we say, is a "one" (*unum*) which results from the union of many different principles. But we cannot have unity from different beings, in so far as they are different, but only in so far as they are ordered to unity. Now evidently this order is not from themselves, since they are different. Consequently, it must be from another which we call the "agent" or the efficient cause. Therefore, since composite beings do exist we must conclude to the existence of causes.

The following quotations from St. Thomas will clarify the minor premise:

Every composite has a cause; for things in themselves *different* cannot unite unless something forces them to unite.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever belongs to a thing otherwise than as such, belongs to it through some cause, as *white* to a man; for that which does not have a cause is first and immediate; wherefore it must needs belong to the thing essentially [*per se*] and as such [*secundum quod ipsum*].<sup>6</sup>

In other words, that which belongs to a thing not essentially but by participation (by real composition) belongs to it through a cause.

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<sup>4</sup> "Et quia omne quod est per aliud, reducitur ad id quod est per se sicut ad causam primam, oportet quod sit aliqua res quae sit causa essendi omnibus rebus, eo quod ipsa est esse tantum; alias iretur in infinitum in causis, cum omnis res, quae non est esse tantum, habeat causam sui esse. Et hoc est causa prima, quae DEUS est." (*De Ente et Essentia*, c. V.) Indeed, we cannot speak of cause in a serious way without realizing, implicitly at least, that there must be a supreme and first cause, which must necessarily be its own "to be," Pure Act, and Perfection Itself.

<sup>5</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 3, 7c.

<sup>6</sup> II, *C.G.*, c. XV.

Every being in any way existing is from God. For whatever is found in anything by participation must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially. . . . All beings apart from God are not their own "to be," but are beings by participation. Therefore, it must be that all things, which are diversified by the diverse participation of being [*essendi*], so as to be more or less perfect, are caused by one First Being, Who "IS" most perfectly [*quod perfectissime est*].<sup>7</sup>

**Why Does Motion Require a First Mover.** Having thus established the absolute necessity of postulating an efficient cause to explain the existence and composition of finite beings, we may proceed to the second question. Why does a being actually change, or move, or become? We should note, however, that this question is not quite like the one we put in the beginning of our treatise on act and potency. There we were looking at the intrinsic possibility of change, and we asked how it is possible for a being to become "being." Now we are dealing with extrinsic possibility. Even so, our answer to the present problem will also be given in terms of act and potency. Briefly, it is this: The being that is *becoming* is evidently in potency to a new act; for change is defined as a passage (*transitus*) from potency to act. Hence in order to become, that is, to be put in act or be actuated, there is need of a cause, of another being already in act. For (and this is a Thomistic expression of the principle of causality) NOTHING IS REDUCED FROM POTENCY TO ACT EXCEPT BY A BEING THAT IS ALREADY IN ACT. To deny this fundamental proposition is to deny, implicitly at least, the principle of contradiction. Let us explain: To deny this proposition is to affirm that a being is in act and not in act as to the same perfection and at the same time. For nothing can give something which it does not possess. Now to be in act means to have a definite perfection, whereas to be in potency to some perfection is to have a mere capacity for it and therefore, not to have the perfection itself. Consequently, to be in act and in potency at the same time and in

<sup>7</sup> S. Th., I, 44, 1c.

regard to the same perfection is simply (*simpliciter*) to be and not to be at the same time and regarding the same thing. It is, therefore, the denial of the principle of contradiction. The same idea is expressed by St. Thomas in the classical phrase: "*Quidquid movetur ab alio movetur*," that is, "whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another." By motion, as here used, is understood any change or mutation. In other words, the term motion embraces any passage from potency to act, whether it be local motion, or instantaneous change; whether material or immaterial (as thought and acts of the will); whether substantial or accidental. We can do no better in setting forth this argument than follow the words of St. Thomas in his momentous proof from motion of the existence of God. It is called the *first way* (*prima via*); and the great Doctor insists that of all demonstrations that can be offered for the existence of the Supreme Being this is the most manifest, the clearest, and most convincing.

It is certain and evident to our senses that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that toward which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction from potency to act. But nothing can be reduced from potency to act, except by something that is in act. . . . Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in act and potency in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is, therefore, impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, that is, that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Here again St. Thomas proceeds immediately to prove the existence of a Supreme Mover. Let us complete the argument of the first way for the proof of the existence of God: "If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover, as the staff moves only

We need go no further. In this last conclusion St. Thomas has shown the absolute necessity of an extrinsic mover or agent to explain *change* and *becoming*. In syllogistic form, the argument can be thus stated:

Whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another; but beings all around us are in motion, and we ourselves are subject to constant changes. Therefore we must postulate the existence of a mover, of a cause.

It is interesting to note that in this discussion we have not only shown the absolute necessity of efficient causes in order to explain finite, limited, and mutable beings, but we have, implicitly at least, demonstrated the existence of a being that is not by participation but that is its own "to be," and, therefore, absolutely simple and unique, the First Cause and Prime Mover of the universe.

Moreover, in proving the absolute necessity of cause from the analysis of the structure of a composite, finite, mutable being, we have shown indirectly that the principle of causality is both analytical and certain. This, however, we shall explain at length in the following question.

## **SECOND QUESTION: Is the Principle of Causality Analytical and Absolutely Certain?**

The principle of causality, like the principle of contradiction, is a metaphysical principle. It belongs to the order of cognition. It expresses a fundamental truth which is exemplified at every turn of the road, and which can almost immediately be deduced from any experience by the intellect of man; that is to say, the passage from potency to act may be experienced. The immediate deduction, however, is an act of the intellect, and, like all intellectual reflections, transcends the empiricism and particularity of sensible experience. The griev-

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because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God." (*S. Th.*, I, q. 2, a. 3c.)

ous mistake of many philosophers in their endeavor to refute the empiricists who have at all times, at least implicitly, denied the absolute universality of this truth, has been to try to translate into sense experience what is one of the most abstract and elevated intellectual realizations. These well-intentioned men seem to have forgotten that experience is complete and stops with the knowledge of the succession of facts, whereas the influx of cause into effect, being, like all motion, in the order of an imperfect act (*actus imperfectus*), can never be reached by the keenest imagination, even when that imagination is helped by the most perfect instruments of science. The knowledge of "causes as causes," the knowledge of the principle of causality, can be had only by the immediate analysis of the subject in the proposition: "Every finite, limited, composite, changeable being has a cause"; or, more simply: "Every effect has a cause." This knowledge, since it is had from the analysis of an absolute essence, gives the most perfect certitude the intellect of man can of itself ever reach, namely, metaphysical certitude.

**Meaning of Principle of Causality.** The principle of causality has been expressed in various ways. We shall find it profitable to consider a few of these.<sup>9</sup>

1. Every effect has a cause.
2. Whatever *is not* but *has* a "to be" must have its efficient cause.
3. Every contingent (not necessary) being has a cause; or, to use the words of St. Thomas: "Nothing can be reduced from potency to act, except by a being in act."<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that in the first enunciation of the principle of causality, the word "effect" is not to be taken in a formal sense, for this would be a mere tautology and not a principle of reason. In the third proposition, by contingent we mean a being whose "to be" is

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<sup>9</sup> These various expressions are the result of our previous investigation on the necessity of cause arising from the analysis of finite being. We might say that they are the definitions obtained from the discussion of the preceding question.

<sup>10</sup> This is expressed by another lapidary expression: "Whatever is in motion is moved by another" (*Quidquid movetur ab alio movetur*).

not of the essence; on the contrary, God is a necessary being because His essence is identified with His "to be."

**Analysis of the Principle.** Now, as we analyze the subject of these propositions, we see at once that an essence which is not its "to be" postulates an extrinsic cause. This exigency for, or relation to, a cause can in no way be known by experience, but only by the intellect as it reflects upon a nature, not, indeed, as an individual nature, but as finite, composite, changeable nature *as such*. Consequently, the relation arising from the knowledge of the nature of a *finite being as such* is necessarily universal. Only the knowledge of such a universal relation to cause can be the absolute foundation for the universality of the principle of causality. To deny, therefore, that the principle of causality is analytical, and to endeavor to prove its absolute, eternal, and immutable truth by means of experience, whether external or internal, is to court certain disaster. The best that can be said in favor of such a stand is that for those who have but little philosophical acumen, the arguments from experience are the only ones that can be grasped. But to establish the realm of metaphysical speculation solely upon such arguments is to reduce philosophy to the stature of an experimental science, and consequently to destroy it.

An analytical principle or proposition, as we have already explained, is one whose predicate is of the essence of the subject. This may mean that the predicate is a constituent of the essence, as in "man is animal"; or it may mean that the predicate is required by the essence as flowing necessarily from the essence as in "man has intelligence and freedom"; or finally that the predicate is required as the term of relation which is rooted in the very essence of the subject. The principle of causality belongs to this last class. In the analysis of the nature of the subject, because of the distinction between essence and the "to be," the whole being must depend upon and have an absolute exigency for an extrinsic cause.

**The Proof.** This, in brief, is our argument: Whatever is contingent (whatever exists contingently) must have a sufficient reason



why it exists rather than not. But this sufficient reason is not an intrinsic one, since the essence is not the "to be." Therefore, it must be an extrinsic principle; and this is what we mean by an efficient cause.

This argument is clearly a mere analysis of the subject of the proposition, which results in the absolute affirmation of the predicate. Note well that the predicate is not "cause," but "must have a cause." All that I need find in the essence of the subject is the reason for this necessity. This is perfectly expressed by the capital text which we quoted in the very beginning of this treatise: "Though relation to the cause is no part of a thing caused, still it follows, as a consequence, on what belongs to its essence; because from the fact that a thing is 'being' by participation it follows that it is caused." Therefore, we conclude, the principle of causality is analytical and absolutely certain.

Another mode of procedure, beginning with the concept of "being," is sometimes proposed. Let us start with the first incomplete principle "being." Our next step in the light of logical development will be the principle of contradiction, or, as it is sometimes called, the principle of identity: "Being is being; non-being is non-being." Now the first half of that proposition "being is being" can be thus expressed: "Whatever is, is," or "whatever is must have a sufficient reason to be." This is sometimes called the principle of sufficient reason. The subject of that proposition is every and all beings, and hence includes God and all creatures. We can omit the first half, for "God who is subsisting 'to be' is His own reason for existence." The second half of the principle should then read: "Creatures, on the contrary, who are not their 'to be,' but have a 'to be' really distinct from their essence are not a sufficient reason for existence to themselves. Consequently, they must have a sufficient reason for existing from another." This is our principle of causality. Perhaps the analysis will be better grasped if represented diagrammatically.

**First Incomplex Principle***Being***First Complex Principle — Principle of Contradiction***Being is; Non-Being is not*

The first half of this principle is called the

**Principle of Intelligibility***Every being is intelligible<sup>10a</sup>*  
or the**Second Complex Principle — Principle of Sufficient Reason***Every being is*

or

*Whatever is, is*

or by analysis

*Whatever is has its sufficient reason for existing*

Now Whatever is, is	{	either God who is His own sufficient reason for existing, because He is His own "to be," or Contingent Being, which is not its own "to be," which can be or not be, and therefore is not its own sufficient reason for existing.
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Then analyzing the second part of this ultimate division, i.e.,

*A contingent being which is not its own "to be" is not its own  
sufficient reason for existing, we may state our***Third Complex Principle — The Principle of Causality***Whatever is contingent has its sufficient reason for existing  
from another*  
or in other words**Every Contingent Being Has An Efficient Cause**


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<sup>10a</sup> In order that a being which exists be intelligible, it is necessary that the reason why it has a "to be" be understandable.

### SCHOLION: Historical Approach to the Problem of Efficient Causality

An historical discussion of the problem of causality is really a history of human thought, for the acceptance or denial of cause as a reality, the degree of certitude with which it is accepted, and even the manner of attacking this profound and far-reaching problem, must necessarily color any system of philosophy. Naturally, in a work of this kind, we must be extremely brief.

Among the ancient Greeks, probably the first philosophers of note who expounded a philosophy that denied or at least explicitly doubted the validity of causes were the Skeptics. This doctrine is clearly proposed by Sextus Empiricus (*circa saec.* II, A.D.). His system of thought, in keeping with such tenets, is one of doubt and skepticism; for if cause is denied, reason is useless and knowledge void.

Al-Ghazali (Algazel, 1058-1111), one of the Arabs (Mohammedan philosophers), excessively limits the capacity of the human intellect. As a consequence, while in no way denying the first cause (in fact, he is something of an Occasionalist), he at least doubts the possibility of knowing with certitude the relation of effect to cause and the actual influx of a cause.<sup>11</sup>

The father of all Nominalists, William of Occam (*Inceptor Venerabilis*, 1295-1349) seems to have doubted the universality of the principle of causality. This is in keeping with the philosophy of one who did not hesitate to write: "It cannot be proved by natural reason that God is the efficient cause of any effect."<sup>12</sup> The causal nexus can be reached only in its empirical causality in so far as it becomes identical with succession and change.<sup>13</sup> This doctrine, founded on a dangerous theory of cognition, prepared the way for empiricism and skepticism.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. De Wulf, *Histoire de la philosophie Médiévale*, Vol. I, p. 304.

<sup>12</sup> *Quodl.* II, q. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Maréchal, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 138.

The theories of William of Occam were brought to their logical conclusions by Nicholas of Autrecourt (*circa* 1347). He denied that anyone could, by means of intellectual reflection and deduction, come from experimental knowledge to the certain knowledge of something not experienced. "It cannot be inferred," he wrote, "from the fact that a certain object is, that something else exists." Consequently, "this conclusion is not evident: 'A' has been produced, therefore there must be, or there must have been something else that produced 'A.'" This doctrine, which is a simple rejection of the principle of causality, and an implicit denial that we can ever know the existence of God the Creator of the world from the knowledge of created things, was condemned by the Church. Nicholas, good and pious Catholic that he was, submitted himself immediately.

From Nicholas we pass to the English Empirical School of the eighteenth century, which wielded such an unfortunate influence upon modern thought, and which prepared the way for Kant and for all the modern heresies. From the viewpoint of thought, we may say that with the English empiricists, philosophy hit an "all time low." For philosophy is correct thinking, but these empiricists either denied that we have an intellect, or reduced that exalted faculty to the role of a highly developed sense faculty. Nothing could be more unphilosophical. How, then, can we explain the phenomenal success of such nefarious doctrines? No doubt the success was entirely due to the fact that these theories were presented to the world by writers of talent, whose works, even to the present day, are exerting considerable influence on the language.

John Locke (1632-1704), the first name of importance in this school, explains that we can never come to an understanding of the notion of cause, because our senses are only able to reach a succession of phenomena; but such data in no way denote causality. Beginning with these false assumptions which are in any theory of cognition a practical denial of the intellect, we should expect Locke to conclude with a necessary rejection of substance

and cause. With delightful British inconsistency, however, and a complete lack of logic, he admits both substance and causality as existing but unknowable to man.<sup>14</sup>

According to David Hume we are able to know facts successively, B after A, and nothing else. Our so-called knowledge of a causal nexus is due to a psychological law. It is a sort of practical necessity: we see a flame, we feel the heat, we conclude to a causal bond between the flame and the heat. There is, Hume explains, a natural inclination to infer causes; objectively, however, we have no foundation to affirm causes, for we have no direct *experience* of such.<sup>15</sup> But Hume goes farther than that; he actually argues that the concept of a finite being in no way need imply causality. "Tis therefore by *experience* only that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another." And again, "We have no other notion of cause and effect, but that of certain objects, which have been *always conjoined* together. . . . We cannot penetrate into the reason of the conjunction. We only observe the thing itself, and always find that from the constant conjunction the objects acquire an union in the imagination."<sup>16</sup>

As all distinct ideas are separable from each other, and as the ideas of cause and effect are evidently distinct, 'twill be easy for us to conceive any object to be non-existent this moment and existent the next, without conjoining it to the distinct idea of cause or productive principle. The separation, therefore, of the idea of a cause from that of a beginning of existence, is plainly possible for the imagination; and consequently the actual separation of these objects is so far possible that it implies no contradiction nor absurdity; and it is therefore incapable of being refuted by any reasoning from mere ideas; without which it is impossible to demonstrate the necessity of a cause.<sup>17</sup>

We have quoted this last passage at length because it demonstrates

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, II, c. 26.

<sup>15</sup> *Treatise on Human Nature*, I, p. 388.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

clearly the necessity of the apprehension of the real distinction between essence and "to be" in order to be able to conclude to the exigency of a cause from a mere analysis of a limited being.<sup>18</sup>

Stuart Mill (1806-1873) taught practically the same doctrine regarding the psychological necessity of affirming a causal bond in our practical life. Such an affirmation, however, pertains entirely to the imaginative faculty and has no objective reality.<sup>19</sup>

Kant strove to correct, continue, and complete the work of Hume. As a matter of fact, his theories are both a continuation of and a reaction against Empiricism. He admits the intellectual capacity of man to know causes, but rejects any "logical," as he calls it, analysis of causality. Nevertheless, in his opinion, the fundamental concept of cause is not borrowed from or founded upon experience. Consequently, it is entirely arbitrary, and is just as incapable of being proved as of being refuted. In this Kant believed he had reached a positive solution far superior to Hume's skepticism. Finally, the principle of causality is synthetic and *a priori*. The intellect expresses an *a priori* form by means of a judgment, and unifies it with a conglomeration of phenomena. Consequently, this principle is merely subjective and has absolutely no value for any transcendental realities such as God.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly, this, like all Kantian theories, is a natural deduction from his erroneous fundamental principle, which implicitly denies the possibility of ever knowing the *noumena*, that is, objective reality as it is in itself. Concede Kant that and there should be no difficulty in adopting all the complicated imaginations of his ingenious mind.

The more recent philosophers, especially the Neo-Hegelians, more logical in this regard than Kant, tend to refuse all value to the principle of causality both in the objective and subjective order.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Maréchal, *op. cit.*, II, p. 167.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *System of Logic*, III, c. V.

<sup>20</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Part II: *Die Transcendentale Logik*, sec. 1, lib. 1; cf. also Maréchal, *op. cit.*, III, p. 30.

Besides, due to the influence of Bergsonianism, we find among them a tendency to deny even the distinction between cause and effect,<sup>21</sup> or, at least, the possibility of ever reaching to the knowledge of the existence of God.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, we should note a controversy which took place in recent years among some Neo-Scholastic philosophers. Some of them, such as De Margerie, Domest de Vorges, Laminne, and Descoqs, although affirming the absolute truth of the principle of causality, and our certitude of it, deny that it is an analytical judgment. Their reason for denying this is that in their judgment the principle of causality cannot be reduced to the principle of contradiction.<sup>23</sup>

### THIRD QUESTION: Nature of Causality

Having ascertained the fact of causality, we naturally desire to go deeper into this mysterious problem and try to determine in what precisely causality consists. To prepare the way for this venture, we shall begin by asking another question: can all existing beings act as agents? or, what is required in order that something be rightly called an efficient cause? or is the nature of causality such that God and only God is capable of causation?

#### Can All Existing Beings Act as Agents?

A good number of philosophers have thought that only the Supreme Being could be a cause in the true sense of the word; what we call the action of creatures was not causative action. Hence, their actions could at best be said to be merely occasions for the manifestations of God's actions. This doctrine has been called Occasionalism and its exponents, Occasionalists.

The first, so far as we know, to voice this doctrine was Avicenna (Ibn-Sina, 980-1037), who, according to St. Thomas, said, "All

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ed. Le Roy, *Le Problème de Dieu*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, lect. 18, pp. 437 et seq.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Descoqs, *Institutiones Metaphysicae Generalis*, pp. 570-578.

forms come from an Intelligence, and the natural agent only prepares matter to receive form. And this opinion comes from his tenet that everything that is generated comes from a being like to itself, a fact that is not always verified in the case of natural beings. . . . Another reason [for this opinion] is his tenet that becoming directly terminates in the form."<sup>24</sup> We find also that Avicbron (Ibn-Gebirol, 1020-1070) in his *Fons Vitae* teaches that these inferior beings, that is, bodies, are not agents. Nevertheless, all things are not brought into being by God alone, but also by a kind of spiritual substance that pervades all bodies.<sup>25</sup>

The most celebrated of the Occasionalists was Nicholas Malebranche (1638-1715), a Catholic priest and a disciple of Descartes. Because of Cartesian exaggerated dualism and the consequent impossibility of interaction between mind and body, he proposed the doctrine called Occasionalism. According to Malebranche the very concept of cause indicates something divine. For him, therefore, the most dangerous of all errors in philosophy is to attribute causality to creatures whether spiritual or corporal. Even men cannot be said to be the true cause of the motion of their own bodies. Only the will of the infinite being is the true cause. Consequently, Malebranche held that there is only one cause, God; that there is no moving force, *vis motrix*, in created things; that what we call natural causes are only occasions which determine the Author of nature to act in such or such a manner.<sup>26</sup>

**Causality of Creatures.** Before giving a formal refutation of the doctrine of the Occasionalists, it is of the greatest importance to establish a clear-cut distinction between the cause of the "to be" (existence) and the cause of "becoming." Only God, says St.

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<sup>24</sup> "Quod omnes formae sunt ab Intelligentia, et agens naturale non est nisi praeparans materiam ad receptionem formae. Et ista opinio procedit ex hoc, quod vult unumquodque generari ex suo simili, quod frequenter non invenitur in rebus naturalibus . . . et etiam quia ponebat fieri per se terminari ad formam." (In II Sent., dist. I, q. I, a. 4, ad 4m.)

<sup>25</sup> Cf. I, 115, 1c.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité*, Book 6, ch. 3, p. 2.



Thomas, can cause the "to be." Thus, inferior agents, creatures are causes of things in the natural order in so far as regards their becoming, but not in regard to their "to be" if we would speak exactly. God, however, of Himself is the cause of the "to be."<sup>27</sup> And in the *Summa Theologica*, I, 104, 1c., he explains the reason for this assertion. After having given the example of a house that is being built, he shows that the agent (in this case, the builder) is the cause of the "becoming" and not of the "to be" of the house. He then continues:

The same principle applies to natural things. For if an agent is not the cause of a form as such, neither will it be the cause of the 'to be' which results from that form, but it will be the cause of the effect in its 'becoming' only. Now it is clear that of two things in the same species, one cannot directly cause the other's form as such, since it would be then the cause of its own form, which is essentially the same as the form of the other; but it can be the cause of the other's form inasmuch as this form is in matter, that is, in order that this matter receive this form. And to be a cause in this manner is to be the cause of 'becoming,' as when man begets man, and fire causes fire.

Creatures, then, are clearly real causes not of the "to be" but of the becoming. By means of these quotations from St. Thomas we may now show some of the erroneous suppositions of the Occasionalists, and some of the absurdities that must follow from their false doctrine.

It is false to say that the true notion of cause must be said of God only, St. Thomas declares: (1) Because the order of cause and effect would be taken away from created things; and this would imply lack of power in the Creator; for it is due to the power of the cause that it bestows active power on its effect.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "*Huiusmodi inferiora agentia (creaturae) sunt causae rerum (naturalium) quantum ad earum fieri, non quantum ad esse eorum per se loquendo. Deus autem per se est causa essendi.*" (*De Pot.*, V, 1, ad 4.)

<sup>28</sup> In their effort to save the omnipotence of God, the Occasionalists really destroyed it. Cf. *S. Th.*, I, 22, 3c.

(2) Because the active powers or faculties which are seen to exist would be bestowed . . . to no purpose. . . . Indeed, all things would seem to be purposeless, since the purpose of everything is operation.<sup>29</sup>

In the third book of the *Contra Gentiles*, chapter sixty-nine, the Angelic Doctor proposes many arguments against those who "withdraw from natural things their proper actions." The lack of space prevents us from mentioning more than a few.<sup>30</sup> After explaining the tenets of the Occasionalists, St. Thomas says:

It is contrary to the notion of wisdom that any thing should be done in vain in the works of a wise man. But if creatures did nothing at all toward the production of effects, and God alone wrought everything immediately, other things would be employed by him in vain for the production of effects. Therefore, the above position is incompatible with divine wisdom.

Besides, he who gives a principle, gives everything naturally connected with that principle [*dat omnia quae consequuntur ad illud*]. . . . Now, to make a thing actual [*actu*] results from being actual [*esse actu*] as we see in the case of God; for He is pure act, and also the first cause of being. . . . If therefore He bestowed His likeness on others in respect of being, in so far as He brought things into being, it follows that He also bestowed on them His likeness in the point of acting, so that creatures too should have their proper actions. . . .

Besides, if effects be produced not by the act of creatures but only by the act of God, the power of a created cause cannot possibly be indicated by its effect: since the effect is no indication of the cause's power, except by reason of the action which proceeds from the power and terminates in the effect. Now the nature of a cause is not known from its effect except in so far as this is an indication of its power which results from nature. Consequently, if creatures exercise no action in producing effects [*non habeant actiones ad producendum effectus*], it will follow that the nature of a creature can never be known from its effect: and so all knowledge of physical science would be denied us, for it is there that arguments from effects are chiefly employed.

<sup>29</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 105, 5c.; cf. I, 115, 1.

<sup>30</sup> It is hoped that the student will not fail to study this very important chapter.

Clearly, then, not only God but creatures should be considered as real causes. However, as we have indicated, there is a very great difference in the effect produced. God alone can cause the "to be"; finite being is the cause of the "becoming." Now what is it that makes it possible for any being to be a real agent, whether of "being" or "becoming"?

### What Are the Requisites for an Efficient Cause?

By its essence whatever is in act is the mover [an agent] and whatever is in potency is the moved [thing acted upon].<sup>31</sup>

It belongs to an *act* by its very nature to communicate itself so far as it can. Therefore, every agent *acts* insofar as it is in act. For to *act* [be an agent] is nothing else than to communicate that by which the agent is in *act* insofar as is possible.<sup>32</sup>

. . . to *act*, which is nothing else than to make something to be in *act*, is essentially proper to an *act* as such.<sup>33</sup>

To make a thing *actual* results from being *actual*.<sup>34</sup>

From all these texts, we gather that any being in so far as it is in act can be an agent. But how does an agent communicate its act, its perfection? By its action, by the exercise of that action, St. Thomas answers.

In prime matter all forms are present in potency . . . and a natural agent produces, not the form, but the composite by reducing the matter from potency to act. And this natural agent in its action [in this production] is a quasi-instrument of God the [prime] mover who made matter and gave potency to form.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "*Natura sua quidquid est actu movet, et quidquid est potentia movetur.*" In VIII Phys., lect. 7.

<sup>32</sup> "*Natura cuiuslibet actus est quod seipsum communicat quantum possibile. Unde unumquodque agens agit secundum quod in actu est. Agere vero nihil aliud est quam communicare illud per quod agens est actu secundum quod est possibile.*" De Pot., II, 1.

<sup>33</sup> S. Th., I, 115, 1.

<sup>34</sup> "*Facere aliquid actu consequitur ad hoc quod est esse actu.*" III, C.G., 69.

<sup>35</sup> "*Omnes formae sunt in potentia in materia prima . . . et agens naturale agit non formam, sed compositum, reducendo materiam de potentia in actum; et hoc agens naturale in sua actione est quasi instrumentum ipsius Dei agentis, qui etiam materiam condidit et formae potentiam dedit.*" (In II Sent., dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4m.)

This text is extremely rich in thought. In it the relations of material and formal causes are explained. Matter is in potency to all corporeal forms. What is the effect produced by the finite agent? Acting directly on the composite being, not upon its form, the finite agent causes this composite being to pass from potency to act, not to any act, but to that perfection which the agent possessed in act. And how does it do it? By its action (*sua actione*). Causality, then, consists in exercising an action in another, and, by so doing, in reducing this object from some particular potency to some particular act. Finally, St. Thomas defines the relation between God and creatures in their respective activity, their mutual action. God is the principal cause; creature is the quasi-instrumental cause.

### What Is Action?

In considering the nature of causality we must not only understand the nature of the cause and of the thing caused, but especially the nature of the action. St. Thomas teaches that causality does not consist in the action itself, but in the exercise of the action. "To act formally considered is to exercise some action."<sup>86</sup> And: "Every agent acts in so far as it is in act. For to act (be an agent) is nothing else than to communicate that by which the agent is in act in so far as it is possible."<sup>87</sup>

**Action.** What then is this action? Action implies three beings: agent, patient, effect. In the patient, action implies a "becoming"; in the agent, as we have noted, it means that the efficient cause must be in act in order to act. Now what of the action itself? Action, says St. Thomas, is not the becoming (*fieri*), for that can be reduced to any predicament. Nor is it a relation; for relation results from action and survives it. It could never constitute action ex-

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<sup>86</sup> "*Agere secundum quod est agere est aliquam actionem exercere.*" (*De Ver.*, V 9, ad 4.)

<sup>87</sup> "*Unumquodque agens agit secundum quod est in actu. Agere vero nihil aliud est quam communicare illud per quod agens est actu, secundum quod est possibile.*" (*De Pot.*, II, 1c.)

clusively. Rather action combines both motion as a foundation together with a relation from the agent to the patient.<sup>38</sup>

**Passion.** The same may be said of "passion" (*passio*). The motion which is the foundation of the "passion" is the same as that which is the foundation of "action." The difference is found in the distinct relations. And that, according to Thomas and Aristotle, is enough to make action and passion two distinct realities, two predicaments. This doctrine is beautifully explained in the *Commentary of the Physics*, the third book and the fifth lesson. It would be well to read the entire lesson carefully.

The following quotation is representative:

It does not follow that action and passion are the same thing, or the teaching and the thing taught, but that the motion in which each of them is founded is the same. Now this motion considered under one aspect is action, and under another it is passion. For it is one thing for it to be the act of this thing "as in this thing," and another to be the act of this thing as "from this thing" depending on the relationship. The motion is called action insofar as it is the act of the agent as "from this being." It is called passion insofar as it is the act of the recipient as "in this being."

Thus, it is clear that though the motion is one, yet the predicaments which arise from relation to that motion are two, since the predicamental terms arise from different external beings.<sup>39</sup>

And in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*,<sup>39a</sup> St. Thomas argues: "Although movement is the common act of the mover and moved, yet it is one operation to cause movement and another to receive

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Vol. I, p. 117 et seq. in Father Sertillanges' remarkable work, *S. Thomas d'Aquin*.

<sup>39</sup> "Non sequitur quod actio et passio sint idem, vel doctio et doctrina, sed quod motus cui inest utrumque eorum, sit idem. Qui quidem motus secundum unam rationem est actio, et secundum aliam rationem est passio. Alterum enim est secundum rationem esse actum huius 'ut in hoc,' et esse actum huius ut 'ab hoc.' Motus autem dicitur actio secundum quod est actus agentis ut ab hoc: dicitur autem passio secundum quod est actus patientis ut in hoc.

"Sic igitur patet quod licet motus sit unus, tamen praedicamenta quae sumuntur secundum motum sunt duo, secundum quod a diversis rebus exterioribus fiunt denominationes praedicamentales." (In III Phys., lect. 5.)

<sup>39a</sup> II, C.G., 57.

movement; hence we have two predicaments: 'action' and 'passion.'"

**Nature of Causality.** This doctrine of St. Thomas on causality is high metaphysics, indeed; and is, like all other important questions, entirely based on the theory of act and potency. There are two extreme views opposed to it. The first is a simple denial of causality in finite beings, as affirmed by the Occasionalists, which ultimately must lead to skepticism and a denial of God. The second is gross materialism; it is that of the pseudo-philosopho-physicists, who would materialize action as something of a push, or a physical something that goes out of the agent—a part or piece of the agent; so that with every action the agent must needs lose something, since some of its virtue, something of itself, has gone out and is now in the effect, or is the effect itself. Hence action would be reducible to a piece of something being placed elsewhere. Now such affirmations are simple denials of all causation, and, of course, explain nothing. What, we should immediately ask, is the *cause* of the agent's losing part of itself? The source of this difficulty, it is clear, is that these materialists labor in the first degree of abstraction, and try to solve a profound metaphysical problem by a physical explanation. The truth is that the agent as agent loses nothing, else God, the angels, and the soul of man would be growing weaker and would soon vanish in thin air. A thing can change only inasmuch as it is in potency; but cause as cause is in act and not in potency; and consequently, cause as cause undergoes no change. How different and satisfying is the doctrine of Thomas, *actio est in passo*. Action is in a patient, a recipient; and the natural agent *in sua actione*, in its action, reduces the matter from potency to act. So that in the action the agent has lost nothing, and the patient has acquired a new form related to the agent. "The agent as far as it is an agent receives nothing; but in so far as it acts because moved by another, it receives something from that which moves it."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "*Agens in quantum agens, non recipit aliquid; sed in quantum agit motum ab alio, sic recipit aliquid a movente.*" (S. Th., I, II, 51, 2, ad 1m.) Of course, in the case of a finite being it has to be put in act before it can move another. We admit,

Again: *actio est in passo* for the change which proceeds from the agent is entirely received in the patient, while the agent as such remains unchanged. Aristotle says:

It is not absurd that the actualization of one thing should be in another. . . . There is nothing to prevent two things having one and the same actualization, provided the actualizations are not described in the same way, but are related as what can act to what is acting. Nor is it necessary that the teacher should learn even if to act and to be acted on are one and the same provided they are not the same in definition (as "raiment" and "dress"), but are the same merely in the sense in which the road from Thebes to Athens and the road from Athens to Thebes are the same.<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion we can say: the nature of efficient causality as such is the *ipsum agere*, that is, the *exercise of action*. Because, therefore, all beings whether pure act or limited act are in act, they are able to act as causes. Finally, the action which is in the agent only as a principle produces the change, the passage from potency to act in the patient. The agent as agent has in no way changed.

**Definition of Efficient Cause.** We are now able, after this lengthy discussion, to define efficient cause; it is, according to the Philosopher: "*That from which the first principle of motion is*"<sup>42</sup> — the primary source of change or of coming to rest. As is evident, we are not in the intentional order but in the real, the existential order. In this order, certainly, the efficient cause is the first principle of motion. For motion or change in the world around us implies matter and form; and the eduction of a new form from the potency of matter is the result of motion, the outcome of causality. Moreover, by change we mean every and all change, every transit from potency to act; and in a wide sense (so that the definition may include the cause of creation), every transit from non-being to being.

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however, that a corporeal agent does change, not because it acts but because it is acted upon by the surrounding bodies.

<sup>41</sup> *Physics*, Book III, c. 3, 202b. 1a.; cf. II, C.G., 57.

<sup>42</sup> *Physics*, Book II, c. 3.

**SCHOLION: Instrumental Causality**

An important and interesting application of the theory of *actio est in passo* lies in a study of the nature of the causality in an instrumental cause.

**Definition.** St. Thomas defines the instrument as *movens motum*, literally "one that moves [another] having been moved [by the principal cause]." "The principal cause is the prime mover, the instrumental is a moved mover."<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, the instrument must be said to have a twofold action: "To an instrument there belongs a twofold action, one it has from its own nature, the other it has in so far as it is moved by the prime agent."<sup>44</sup>

**Twofold Action.** The nature of these two actions of the instrument he explains as follows: "An instrument has two actions; the first, instrumental, according to which it acts by reason of a virtue that is not its own . . . the second is that which belongs to it by reason of its intrinsic form. . . . It can only carry out its action as an instrument by the exercise of the action proper to itself, as an axe by cutting makes a bed."<sup>45</sup>

And also: "Every instrumental agent carries out the action of the principal agent by some action proper and connatural to itself."<sup>46</sup>

It follows from this that the effect produced may be of a higher nature than the instrument itself.<sup>47</sup> This is understandable, since

<sup>43</sup> "*Agens principale est primum movens, agens autem instrumentale est movens motum.*" (In IV Sent., dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 1.)

<sup>44</sup> "*Instrumento autem competit duplex actio: una quam habet ex propria natura, alia quam habet prout est motum a primo agente.*" (Loc. cit.)

<sup>45</sup> "*Instrumentum habet duas actiones, unam instrumentalem, secundum quam operatur non in virtute propria . . . ; aliam actionem propriam quae competit sibi secundum formam propriam. . . . Non autem perficit instrumentalem actionem nisi exercendo actionem propriam; sicut securis scindendo facit lectum.*" (S. Th., III, 62, 1, ad 2m.)

<sup>46</sup> "*Omne agens instrumentale exsequitur actionem principalis agentis per aliquam actionem propriam et connaturalem sibi.*" (II, C.G., 21.)

<sup>47</sup> Cf. in IV Sent., loc. cit. ad 3m.



the effect is assimilated to the principal cause, and hence is not proportioned to the instrumental cause.

**Nature of Instrumental Causality.** From these statements we may draw certain definite knowledge about the intimate nature of this causality.<sup>48</sup>

What is the "virtue" of the instrument in so far as it is an instrument, that is, in so far as it acts beyond its natural capacity? We answer with Thomas that this "virtue" is in the instrument as a form, "*tamquam quaedam forma*," not, however, as a form which has a complete "to be" in nature, but rather in the *manner* of a relation — "*per modum intentionis*." Notice that we do not say that it *is* a relation. It is not that, for relation is a form with its complete "to be." This virtue, on the contrary, is an imperfect act.<sup>49</sup>

What, then, is the nature of this "virtue," this "*intentio*"?<sup>50</sup> St. Thomas says that it is emanating or flowing — *fluens*: "As to a certain instrumental power flowing and incomplete."<sup>51</sup> Consequently, the instrument does not produce the effect by reason of a form inhering in itself, but only because it is moved by the agent.<sup>52</sup> It is clear, therefore, that that which is added to the power of the instrument is not received as a habit in it — *per modum habitus*, but as a passion — *per modum passionis*,<sup>53</sup> for having been received it does not remain, it does not become its own quality (as an educed form would), but passes immediately.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Arnou, *Metaphysica Generalis*, p. 191.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *De Potentia*, III, 11, ad 14m; in *IV Sent.*, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 2; et *ibid.*, dist. 8, q. 2, a. 3c.

<sup>50</sup> Not like any other virtue, this "intention" is intended (that is, directed) to something else, namely the effect. This intention, however, is not in the logical but in the real order.

<sup>51</sup> "*Secundum quamdam instrumentalem virtutem, quae est fluens et incompleta in esse naturae*." (*S. Th.*, III, 62, 3.) Cf. also the objections in the same article, and *De Veritate*, XXVII, 7c.

<sup>52</sup> *De Ver.*, XXVII, 4c. et ad 4m.

<sup>53</sup> This "intention" is not a *passio* (passion), for as such it would have to be an *actus perfectus*, but it is "like a *passio*" in that it does not remain, but is transient.

<sup>54</sup> *De Ver.*, XII, 1c.

Finally, we should note that these "intentions" remain in the instrument because of the presence of the principal agent.<sup>55</sup>

Obviously, all that has been explained holds true in regard to the spiritual "virtue" produced in an instrumental corporal agent, by a principal spiritual agent.<sup>56</sup> There are many important and extremely interesting applications of this theory, both in philosophy and theology. For example, we may recall the elevation of the phantasm, which is not a spiritual entity, by the spiritual action of the agent intellect. In this case the agent intellect is the principal cause of the intelligible species. In the realm of theology, the beautiful Thomistic solution to the problem of the causality of the sacraments is based entirely on this doctrine; so, too, is the explanation of the action of hellfire upon the souls of the damned. As Thomas aptly remarks: "the effect is not assimilated to the instrument but to the principal agent."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *De Pot.*, VI, 4c.; V, 1, ad 6m.

<sup>56</sup> *S. Th.*, III, 62, ad 1m; et ad 2m; *De Ver.*, XXVI, 1c. et ad 8m; *De Pot.*, VI, 4c.

<sup>57</sup> "*Unde effectus non assimilatur instrumento, sed principali agenti.*"

## CHAPTER TWO

### FINALITY (THE END)

#### PROLOGUE

*"The end is the cause of causes, because it is the cause of causality in all causes."*<sup>1</sup>

The problem of reality has obliged us to make a profound study of limited "being." From this study we have derived a true knowledge of the intrinsic principles of "being," and of the necessity of the extrinsic principle called the efficient cause or agent. Now we must inquire into the ultimate reason for the action of the agent — namely, the final cause, the *end*, the "cause of causes."

Our intention is to show that all agents, even those which lack intellect and will, even those deprived of sensation, of life, in a word, all beings, in so far as they act, or have become efficient causes, must be determined in their actions by the end or the final cause. This we propose to show, not by projecting, as it were, our own experience into the actions of others,<sup>2</sup> but by a serious analysis of the action of the agent which will manifest with absolute certitude the metaphysical necessity of the end. Indeed, our aim is to prove that an efficient cause would be quite unintelligible without an implicit realization, at least, of finality.

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<sup>1</sup> *De Principiis Naturae.*

<sup>2</sup> Our own internal experience teaches us "that everything that is produced through the *will* of an agent is directed to an end by the agent: because the good and the end are the proper object of the will; wherefore, whatever proceeds from a will must needs be directed to an end." (III, *C.G.*, Prologue.) The good which is desired is the end, and in regard to any particular action placed to attain it, it is called the final cause.

Our treatise will contain two questions. First: Can the principle of finality be proved to be true from a mere analysis of the terms? Is it an analytic principle, and, therefore, absolutely certain? Second: What is the nature of the causality of the end? And then we shall briefly discuss the exemplary cause (*causa exemplaris*).

### FIRST QUESTION: Does Every Agent Act for an End?

**Determination of Agent.** We can make no better beginning than to quote St. Thomas: "Were an agent not to act for a definite effect, all effects would be indifferent to it. Now that which is indifferent to many effects does not produce one rather than another: wherefore, from that which is indifferent to either of two effects, no effect results, unless it be *determined by something to one of them*. Hence it would be impossible for it to act. Therefore, *every agent tends to some definite effect, which is called its end*."<sup>3</sup> In this penetrating analysis, the nature of the agent as such is considered. The argument is applicable, therefore, to all agents, intellectual or not. An action is necessarily ordered to a definite effect, for the effect must be determined to be *this* effect and not another. But what is it that determines the agent to this particular action? Certainly not the agent as agent, for in that case all agents would always be ordered to this particular action, to this particular effect. Consequently, the agent as agent is indifferent to any particular action. Therefore, it must be determined by something else. This something else is what we call the end or final cause. In this case we shall find it to be a tendency, an intention, an appetite.

We may emphasize and further clarify this truth by another capital text:

Every agent of necessity acts for an end. For if, in a number of causes ordained to one another, the first be removed, the others must of necessity be removed also. Now the first of all causes is the

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<sup>3</sup> III, C.G., c. 2.

final cause. The reason of which is that matter does not receive form, save in so far as it is moved by an agent; for nothing reduces itself from potency to act. But an agent does not move except out of intention for an end. For if the agent were not determinate to some particular effect, it would not do one thing rather than another: consequently, in order that it produce a determinate effect, it must of necessity be determined to some certain one, which has the nature of an end. And just as this determination is effected in the rational nature by the rational appetite, which is called the will; so, in other things, it is caused by their natural inclination, which is called the natural appetite.<sup>4</sup>

This demonstration is practically the same as the previous one. If the agent were not determined to a definite effect, it could not act and produce this effect rather than another. Therefore, it would not act at all. The determination of the agent to a definite effect is precisely what we mean by the end.

**Principle of Finality.** The expression of this universal law, that *every agent acts for an end*, is called the principle of finality. It is a principle of knowledge, and is a self-evident truth, as has been shown by the preceding analysis. Indeed it could not be denied without involving a contradiction. For if there were no final cause moving the agent, the agent simply could not act, and hence it would at once be an agent and a non-agent. Such a being would be unintelligible, because it is made fully intelligible precisely by the affirmation of the end. We must conclude therefore that the principle of finality is absolutely true, absolutely certain.

**How Does an Agent Tend to Its End?** When we affirm that an agent must act for an end, we should understand that just as agents vary in nature, so they must also vary in the manner in which they act for an end. "It must be observed," says St. Thomas, "that a thing tends to an end by its action or movement in two ways":

<sup>4</sup> *S. Th.*, I-II, 1, 2. The first part of this text is a clear exposition of the influx of the various causes, one upon another. The first is the final cause. It moves the agent to do *this* particular action. The outcome of this action is that a new form is received in matter.

First, as a thing moving itself to the end — man, for example. Secondly, as a thing moved by another to the end, as an arrow tends to a determinate end through being moved by the archer, who directs his action to the end. Therefore, those things that are possessed of reason, move themselves to an end; because they have dominion over their actions, through their free will (*liberum arbitrium*) which is the faculty of will and reason. But those things that lack reason tend to an end, by *natural inclination*, as being moved by another and not by themselves; since they do not know the nature of an end as such, and consequently cannot ordain anything to an end, but can be ordained to an end by another. Consequently, it is proper to the rational nature to tend to an end, as directing (*agens*) and leading itself to the end; whereas it is proper to the irrational nature to tend to an end, as directed or lead by another, whether it apprehend the end (by sense faculties), as do irrational animals, or do not, as is the case of those things which are altogether void of knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

**Appetite.** And this brings up the question of the appetite itself — that is, the inclination which the agent has to attain the end, to act because of the end. This tendency, this desire of the end, is obvious in man. We seek what we desire. In other creatures, however, this appetite is not so clearly perceived. Can we state definitely that in all beings, in so far as they are agents, we must find an appetite, an orientation to act in a determined, definite manner? St. Thomas holds that we can. He answers:

There is an appetite which arises from an apprehension existing, not in the subject of the appetite, but in some other: and that is called the *natural appetite*. This is because natural things seek what is suitable to them according to their nature, by reason of an apprehension which is not in them, but in the Author of their nature.

And there is another appetite arising from an apprehension in the subject of the appetite, but from necessity and not from free will. Such is in irrational animals, the *sensitive appetite*.

Again, there is still another appetite following freely from an

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<sup>5</sup> S. Th., I-II, 1, 2.

apprehension in the subject of the appetite. And this is the *rational* or *intellectual appetite*, which is called the will.<sup>6</sup>

**Finality Presupposes an Intellect.** "Every agent tends to some effect which is the end."<sup>6a</sup> The end, then, is the effect as intended and not as produced. It is that "in which the intellect tends."<sup>6b</sup> It is not a physical determination, because the end which determines the action of an agent is not yet produced but intended. It is therefore in the intentional order, that is, the order of reason. Naturally the question will arise: How can any agent devoid of reason intend an effect; or to face the difficulty more squarely, how can a natural appetite be determined by an effect not yet actuated? Clearly in non-rational beings we cannot postulate a final cause formally present and actually desired in the order of reason. And yet the action of an agent cannot be explained, cannot be made intelligible without that determination which we call finality.

Nor would it help in speaking of the necessity of nature to say that the action of an agent is determined by the necessity of its nature, for that is merely restating the problem: namely, how can it be necessitated to such an end?

The point, then, which must be stressed is that if a being acts for a definite end, it acts intelligently. "Every work of nature is the work of intelligence,"<sup>6c</sup> precisely because nature acts for a definite

<sup>6</sup> This is the actual text, which is freely adapted above. "*Est autem quidam appetitus non consequens apprehensionem ipsius appetentis, sed alterius, et huiusmodi dicitur appetitus naturalis. . . . Alius autem est appetitus consequens apprehensionem ipsius appetentis, sed ex necessitate, non ex iudicio libero; et talis est appetitus sensitivus in brutis. . . . Alius autem est appetitus consequens apprehensionem appetentis secundum liberum iudicium, et talis est appetitus rationalis. . . . In unoquoque autem horum appetituum amor dicitur illud quod est principium motus tendentis in finem amatum. In appetitu autem naturali principium huiusmodi motus est connaturalitas appetentis ad id, in quod tendit, quae dici potest amor naturalis. . . . Et similiter coaptatio appetitus sensitivi vel voluntatis ad aliquod bonum, id est ipsa complacentia boni, dicitur amor sensitivus vel intellectivus, seu rationalis.*" (S. Th., I-II, 26, 1c.)

<sup>6a</sup> III, C.G., 2.

<sup>6b</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6c</sup> De Ver., V, 2, ad 5m.

end; and since a non-rational being is without intellect, *this inclination to a determined end must have been impressed upon it by an intelligent cause.*

Therefore, things which can in no way know, can nevertheless have desire; that is, in so far as they are directed to a definite thing which exists in the material order. For appetite does not of necessity argue a spiritual existence as does cognition. Wherefore, there can be a natural appetite without a natural cognition. Nor yet is the truth of this hindered by the fact that in all cases appetite follows upon cognition; for this cognition does not belong to these appetitive beings themselves, but to Him who ordains them to their end.<sup>64</sup>

Since a material being is determined in its own material existence, and has but one tendency to a determined thing, for this reason no knowledge is required whereby it would distinguish according to the norm of appetibility what is appetible from what is not. But this knowledge is prerequisite in the One who forms the nature, and who has given each nature its proper and befitting tendency.<sup>65</sup>

The ultimate solution of the problem of finality, that is, the intrinsic determination which is found in the things of nature, or, in other words, the natural appetite drawing a being to its end, can only be explained ultimately by God, *Ipsum Esse*, the Author of nature, the Giver of finality, the End of all beings. "The natural necessity inherent in those beings which are determined to a particular thing is a kind of impression from God . . . *that which creatures receive from God is their nature.*"<sup>66</sup>

**The Existence of God Proved From Finality.** The argument from

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<sup>64</sup> "Unde illa quae nullo modo possunt cognoscere, tamen possunt appetere, in quantum ordinantur ad aliquam rem in esse naturae existentem. Appetitus enim non respicit de necessitate esse spirituale, sicut cognitio. Unde potest esse naturalis appetitus, sed non cognitio. Nec tamen hoc prohibetur per hoc quod appetitus in universalibus cognitionem sequitur; non tamen ipsorum appetentium, sed illius qui ea in finem ordinat. (De Ver., XXII, 3, ad 5m.)

<sup>65</sup> "Quia vero res naturalis in suo esse naturali determinata est; et una est eius inclinatio ad aliquam rem determinatam: unde non exigitur aliqua apprehensio, per quam secundum rationem appetibilitatis distinguatur res appetibilis a non appetibili. Sed haec apprehensio praeexigitur in instituente naturam, qui unicuique naturae dedit inclinationem propriam sibi convenientem." (De Ver., XV, 1.)

<sup>7</sup> S. Th., I, 103, 1.



finality, like the demonstration for the absolute necessity of efficient cause, leads us almost immediately to the proof of the existence of God — (the fifth way *Quinta via*), and not merely of a God such as the eighteenth-century pseudo-philosophers thought they could discover from their travesty of the argument from causality, namely a sort of glorified watchmaker,<sup>8</sup> but of a God who is "Subsisting Intellect," and, therefore, Pure Act. If Kant<sup>9</sup> thought he had refuted the proof of the existence of God from order, it is because he never knew, never understood this demonstration except as presented in a corrupted form by the predecessors of Wolff. Thus corrupted, the argument, as is generally admitted, proved at best that God — a sort of super-policeman — is a superior mind, but by no means that He is the "*Subsisting to be*."

When we speak of an object being moved by God, we must distinguish between God the First Efficient Cause moving all things by a physical, non-material motion; and God the Giver of finality because He is the End as well as the Giver of nature with all its tendencies, necessities, and finalities. In this demonstration we do not argue to God the First Efficient Cause, but from the consideration of the finality which we find in the actions of contingent beings we perceive the necessity of God, the Supreme End.

Now the action of every agent supposes an intellect, and, ultimately, a "Subsisting Intellect." St. Thomas proposes this doctrine often. Whenever we speak of action, he says, we mean that the agent somehow communicates the form he has in act. *Omne agens agit sibi simile*. For an agent acts in so far as it is in act. *Omne agens agit in quantum est actu*. Now how can the form in the agent be the end of the action or generation?

In all things . . . the form must be the end of any generation whatsoever. But an agent does not act on account of the form, ex-

<sup>8</sup> "God, then, became the 'watchmaker' of Fontenelle and of Voltaire, the supreme engineer of the huge machine which this world is." (Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, p. 107.)

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason," *Transcendental Dialectics*, Book II, c. 3, sect. 6.

cept in so far as the likeness of the form is in the agent, as may happen in two ways. For in some agents the form of the thing to be made pre-exists according to its natural being, as in those that act by their nature. Whereas in other agents (the form of the thing to be made pre-exists) according to intelligible being as those that act by the intellect.<sup>10</sup>

The second case presents no difficulty. In the first, the form that is the end pre-exists according to the nature of the agent. But how does this natural determination of the agent indicate an intellect? Because obviously this determination to a definite act on the part of a nature cannot be from itself as agent. "The operation of nature, which is to an end that is determined, presupposes an intellect that established the end of nature, and orders nature to that end. For this reason every work of nature is called the work of intelligence."<sup>11</sup> And again: "That determination by which a natural thing is determined to a particular end does not come from the thing itself but from another. Hence, that very determination to an appropriate effect is a proof of providence."<sup>12</sup>

From the *ordo ad finem*, from the determination to a determined end which we find in every action we rise to the affirmation of the existence of the Supreme Intellect. This argument is of intrinsic necessity, and may be applied to any limited being, even to an intellectual creature; for an intellect which is not its object but is ordered to it by an intrinsic determination is a *res naturalis*; it is a potency really distinct from its act. Consequently, its determination to that act cannot be explained fully until we reach the Intellect which is its own act, because it is pure act, and therefore Intelligibility itself, *Ipsa Intelligibilitas*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> S. Th., I, 15, 1.

<sup>11</sup> "Operatio naturae, quae est ad determinatam finem praesupponit intellectum, praestituentem finem naturae et ordinantem ad finem illam naturam, ratione cuius omne opus naturae dicitur esse opus intelligentiae." (De Ver., III, 1c.)

<sup>12</sup> "Ista determinatio qua res naturalis determinatur ad unum, non est ei ex seipsa sed ex alio, et ideo ipsa determinatio ad effectum convenientem providentiam demonstrat." (De Ver., V, 2, ad 5m.)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 387 et sq.

**Error of Materialist Evolutionists.** We must compassionate the materialist evolutionists who thought that they had destroyed God when they postulated internal necessity, namely nature itself, as a complete solution of the problem. Not understanding the difference between a philosophical cause and its manifestation in the physical order, in the world of phenomena, and failing completely to realize that the mode of influence of final causality is not at all that of the agent, these excellent biologists thought there really was no longer any need for a supreme ordinator—*a deus ex machina*. They thought that all could be solved by speaking of necessity, adaptation, survival of the fittest, as the ultimate reason for order, development and evolution.<sup>14</sup> They really delivered themselves into our hands, for their argument from necessity and from the powers of adaptation of nature is precisely Thomas' argument from the finality of nature. There is, however, one very great difference: the evolutionists do not go far enough, they stop at necessity. Starting out in the first degree of abstraction, they are quite content to solve an abstract and profound philosophical problem in that same degree of abstraction, without rising above the grosser and material aspects of reality. Finding a sort of necessity in nature, they remain satisfied to affirm that this necessity is sufficient to explain ultimate realities. For the philosopher, on the contrary, the inference is immediate. Necessity in nature is a clear manifestation of a determined order, a clear indication of finality, but finality necessarily presupposes an intellect. Now this intellect, if not subsisting, is like any natural thing, it is in potency to its object; it imports finality to the intelligible. And because an infinity of causes essentially subordinated to one another is an impossibility, we must at last reach the first intellect which is its own act, its own end, and its own "to be."

The mistake made by many Christian apologists was that they thought the danger lay in the so-called evolution of species. This

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<sup>14</sup> Fundamentally, there is nothing new in their argument. It is the old solution of Democritus refurbished to look modern.

would have caused little worry to St. Thomas, except of course in regard to the evolution of man, which probably would have greatly amused him. For, as is well known, the Angelic Doctor had no trouble in explaining spontaneous generation which was accepted as a fact by the scientists of his day. He, of course, was not so foolish as to call it "spontaneous generation," for that is a contradiction. But the transition, the passing of non-living to living, could be easily explained by postulating a convenient sufficient cause out of the blue.<sup>15</sup> But never with his philosophical acumen could he have thought as these good apologists did that the ultimate solution of finality could be found in the study of biology, anthropology, and geology. The biologists started right enough, but failed to go far enough. We take the argument where they left off; we grant this necessity of nature, this manifestation of finality, and conclude to the reality of the Supreme Intellect, who is the "*Subsisting to be.*"

### SCHOLION: Finality in the History of Thought

Most errors, even those of the modern era, are old in the history of thought. Indeed, among the earlier Greek philosophers we find the precursors of modern evolutionism: Empedocles (fifth century B.C.) and Democritus (born about 460 B.C.) Aristotle has an interesting page, supposedly from Democritus, which reads like that of a modern follower of Darwin, except that the doctrine is more clearly expressed and seems more plausible.

Why should not nature work, not for the sake of something, nor because it is better so, but just as the sky rains, not in order to make the corn grow, but of necessity? What is drawn up must cool, and

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<sup>15</sup> "*Ceux qui ont prétendu s'opposer a priori aux théories Darwiniennes au nom de la philosophie thomiste ont donc commis une double faute. Ils ont oublié premièrement que nul a priori de ce genre n'a le droit de préjuger des recherches de la science. Ensuite, et c'est ici notre objet, ils ont mal interprété la philosophie thomiste, ne distinguant pas en elle, ce qui est vraiment principe de ce qui n'est qu'adaptation de ces principes à des connaissances essentiellement revisables.*" (Sertillanges, *St. Thomas*, Vol. II, p. 24.)

what has been cooled must become water and descend, the result of this being that the corn grows. Similarly, if a man's crop is spoiled on the threshing-floor, the rain did not fall for the sake of this—in order that the crop might be spoiled, but that result just followed. Why then should it not be the same with the parts in nature, e.g., that our teeth should come up of *necessity*—the front teeth sharp, fitted for tearing, the molars broad and useful for grinding down the food—since they did not arise for this end, but it was merely a coincident result; and so with all other parts in which we suppose there is a purpose? Wherever then all the parts came about just what they would have been if they had come to be for an end, such things survived, being organized spontaneously in a fitting way; whereas those which grew otherwise perished and continue to perish, as Empedocles says his “man-faced ox-progeny” did.<sup>16</sup>

In refuting these doctrines, Aristotle does not deny the necessity and determinism of nature; on the contrary he affirms it, for this necessity, this determinism necessarily implies finality, and is—as we explained above—the foundation for our demonstration.

The theory of Democritus was repeated by the Epicureans. The introduction, however, by Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) of chance as a new factor somewhat modified the doctrine of determinism.

Because of his nominalistic theory of knowledge which prepared the way for the Empiricists, William of Occam was forced to deny the absolute certainty of the principle of finality. “No one can prove,” he insists, “that such an agent acts for an end.”<sup>17</sup>

While in no way putting in doubt finality, nor that God is the supreme ordinator, René Descartes (1596-1650) declares that it is rash for us to investigate the designs of Divine Providence.<sup>18</sup> In this he was repeating the assertion of Francis Bacon de Verulam (1561-1626) that it is useless to seek to know the final causes.

The reply to this assertion of Descartes is simply that the prin-

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<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, Book II, c. 8, 198b, 10 seq. (Trans. by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye.)

<sup>17</sup> “*Non potest probari quod tale agens agat propter finem.*” (*Quodl.* IV.)

<sup>18</sup> “*Nous rejetons entièrement de notre Philosophie la recherche des causes finales.*” (*Principes*, I, c. 28.)

ciple of finality is not an investigation after definite final causes, but the statement of a profound truth—namely, that all things act for an end. Moreover, we do not see why it is so wrong to admit that this object, e.g., the eye, has for its definite end to see.

In more recent times, Hume, and after him the materialists, evolutionists, and positivists, deny all finality, as we have explained in the preceding corollary.

Kant himself (1724-1804), despite his good will, is not able to find certitude in the principle of finality. Consequently, according to him, we cannot come to a certain knowledge of the existence of a supreme architect by the demonstration from finality. He argues from analogy to accuse us of attaining unwarranted conclusions. Just as we see that an architect has a definite purpose in building a house, and that from a consideration of the house we come to the knowledge that there must have been an intellect and will determining its end; so from a study of the world we conclude that the order in the world must be due to a superior intellect. Such an analogy, however, says the philosopher of Königsberg, in no way gives us certitude but probability merely—"inferring from the analogy of certain products of nature with the works of human art . . . houses . . . and inferring from this that a similar causality, namely, understanding and will, must be at the bottom of nature."<sup>19</sup>

Evidently Kant either did not know or did not understand the argument of finality as presented by St. Thomas. We do not argue from an analogy, which may or may not give certitude, but we argue from a metaphysical necessity which we discover from an analysis of "being," and which ultimately must lead us to the affirmation of a Pure Intellect.

Finally, in our own days, Henri Bergson (1859-1941), in his *Creative Evolution*, fears that the principle of finality is too anthropomorphic: "Finality," he says, "is only inverted mechanism. . . . It substitutes the attraction of the future for the impulsion of

<sup>19</sup> Kant, *op. cit.*, ch. III, sect. 6.

the past."<sup>20</sup> He would have it with less fixed and rigid outlines; in this sense he admits finality. "The theory we shall put forward in this book," he affirms, "will partake of finalism to a certain extent."<sup>21</sup> Perhaps Bergson, especially in his later works, is not so far from true finalism as he imagines.

The great philosophers of all times have always held fast to the doctrine of the final cause. Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas, and all the great scholastics, together with many others, have taught that the principle of finality is absolutely certain and is a foundation of our knowledge of reality.

## SECOND QUESTION: What Is the Nature of the Causality of the End?

**Definition.** Following our discussion on finality, we are now prepared to give a definition of *final cause*. *Final cause is that on account of which something is done (id propter quod aliquid fit).* Cardinal Zigliara remarks that final cause is the object which incites, moves, and determines the efficient cause; that is, the agent does not fulfill its action, except in so far as it is moved by the love or desire of the end, so that having obtained the end the agent terminates its action and rests in its possession. This explanation makes it clear why authors say that the final cause is in the intentional order—order of the mind, while the efficient cause is in the order of execution—order of existence and of action. The efficient cause acts, and by its action produces an effect. The final cause has no action, and cannot have any since it is not in the order of existence, but being known or conceived, it moves the agent to act because it appears good to the will. It is clear that the final cause, at least in the last analysis, supposes an intellect and a will in the efficient cause (at least in the ultimate efficient cause, God).

<sup>20</sup> Bergson, *op. cit.*, c. I, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

Moreover, when we say that the end is in the order of intention, we mean the end in a formal sense, the end considered precisely as end. The desire for food, for example, moves me to eat dinner. You say the dinner is the end, but it was already in existence; therefore the end is in the order of existence. Very true; but the dinner as food already prepared is not the end in a formal sense; it is what philosophers call the *objective end*, that is, the object desired. The formal end or cause is the possession of the object. Here it will be *eating the dinner*. Clearly, until the actual eating takes place, the dinner is only an object of desire; it is not as yet an actuality; it is still in the intentional order.

**Division.** Authors also distinguish between this objective end (*finis qui*) and the subjective (*finis cui*). As we have noted, the object of my desire is the objective end. The subject himself desirous of obtaining the end is the subjective end. "The last *end* of every maker as such is *himself*: for what we make, we use for our own sake, and if at any time a man make a thing for the sake of something else, it is referred to his own good, whether his *use*, his *pleasure*, or his *virtue*" (*utile, delectabile, honestum*).<sup>22</sup>

Finally, St. Thomas distinguishes between the end of the action, and the end of the one acting (*finis operis et finis operantis*). An example will make this clear. The end of almsgiving is to alleviate poverty. However, the giver may have another motive, which in this particular case is the determining factor of his action (*finis operantis*), namely, the desire to be thought a generous man.

This distinction is important when we speak of God as working for an end, and we wonder how God could have an end that is not Himself. St. Thomas, giving the solution of this problem, makes this very interesting statement:

Since every divine work is ordered to some end, it is clear that God works for an end from the work considered in itself. But because the end of the work is always reduced to the end of the one working, it is necessary to consider the end of his action from the

<sup>22</sup> III, C.G., 17.



point of view of the worker, and this end is his good in himself. We must note that one acts in this way for either of two reasons: because one desires the end or because one loves it. Now desire is for a good not possessed, while love is for a good already possessed. . . . Hence, it belongs to every creature to act out of desire for an end, since the creature acquires from another a good which of itself it does not have. But it is the part of God to act out of love for the end, since nothing can be added to His goodness. For He loves His own goodness perfectly, and on this account wants this goodness to be multiplied in the only way possible, namely, by a likeness to it. From this there follows utility for the creature, insofar as it receives a likeness to the divine goodness. Hence, we say that God made the creature because of His goodness, if we consider the end of the worker, and because of the utility of the creature, if we consider the end of the work.<sup>23</sup>

We speak, therefore, of the goodness of God which is the *end*, not the final cause, of God the agent; for God cannot have a cause, not even in the order of finality.

**The End, a Real Cause.** We are able to state now that the end in creatures is a real cause, for it determines the agent to act. This it does not by any action of its own (for its mode of causality is not at all like that of the efficient cause), but because the agent is moved by a desire to produce the end or to acquire it. Therefore, it exerts real causality upon the efficient cause. Indeed, without this influence the agent, being indifferent to any particular action, would never be able to act nor produce the effect.

<sup>23</sup> "*Cum omne opus divinum in finem quemdam ordinatum sit, constat quod ex parte operis Deus propter finem agit. Sed quia finis operis semper reducitur in finem operantis, ideo oportet, quod etiam ex parte operantis finis actionis eius consideretur, qui est bonum ipsius in ipso. Sciendum est ergo quod agere hoc modo est dupliciter, vel propter desiderium finis, vel propter amorem finis; desiderium enim est rei non habitae, sed amor est rei quae habetur . . . et ideo omni creaturae convenit agere propter desiderium finis, quia unicuique creaturae acquiritur bonum ab alio, quod ex se non habet. Sed Deo competit agere propter amorem finis, cuius bonitati nihil addi potest. Ipse enim bonitatem suam perfecte amat, et ex hoc vult quod bonitas sua multiplicetur per modum qui possibilis est, ex sui scilicet similitudine; ex quo provenit utilitas creaturae, in quantum similitudinem divinae bonitatis recipit; et ideo dicitur quod Deus fecit creaturam propter bonitatem suam, considerando finem operantis; et propter utilitatem creaturae, considerando finem operis.*" (*In II Sent.*, dist. I, q. 2, a. 1.)

It is clear from this that the final cause is the first of all the causes, although it is the last to be actualized as an effect in the order of existence. As cause, and in the intentional order, it is simply the first. It moves the agent to act; the term of the action of the agent into the composite is the eduction of a new form from the potency of matter, so that the composite, the union, that is, of matter and form depends on the efficient cause, and the efficient upon the final.

The efficient is the cause of the end as regards its "to be" inasmuch as by its motion the efficient cause works to this effect, that the end exists. The end, though, is the cause of the efficient cause, not in its being but in its formal nature of causality. Now the efficient cause is a cause insofar as it acts, but the final cause does not act.<sup>24</sup>

The final cause is the reason for the causality of the efficient cause, for it makes the efficient cause efficient; in the same way it is the reason for matter being matter and form being form, since matter does not receive form except for some end, and form does not perfect matter except through some final end. Hence, the final cause is called the cause of causes, since it causes the causality in every cause.<sup>25</sup>

**Intimate Nature of Final Causality.** One last point should be made about the intimate nature of final causality. It is evident that what attracts, incites, determines the agent is the goodness of the end, not viewed as a cause, as it is in the intentional order, but in the real order as it will appear when the effect is produced. This goodness of the end in the order of existence is called by authors finality in its remote sense (*finalitas in actu primo*). "That to which an agent tends definitely must needs be befitting to that agent: since

<sup>24</sup> "Efficiens est causa finis quantum ad esse quidem, quia movendo perducit efficiens ad hoc quod sit finis. Finis autem est causa efficientis non quantum ad esse, sed quantum ad rationem causalitatis. Nam efficiens est causa in quantum agit; non autem agit nisi causa finis." (In V Met., lect. 2, No. 775.)

<sup>25</sup> "Finis est causa causalitatis efficientis qui facit efficiens esse efficiens; et similiter facit materiam esse materiam, et formam esse formam, cum materia non suscipiat formam nisi propter finem, et forma non perficiat materiam nisi per finem. Unde dicitur quod finis est causa causarum, quia est causa causalitatis in omnibus causis." (De Principiis Naturae, in medio.)

the latter would not tend to it save on account of some fittingness thereto. But that which is befitting to a thing is good for it. Therefore every agent acts for a good."<sup>26</sup>

That, however, which moves the agent here and now to act is the very desire (*ipsum desiderari, appeti*) of the agent. This is the very influx of the final cause, for the end moves the agent in so far as the agent loves and desires the end. "Just as the influence of the efficient cause lies in its action, so the influence of the final cause is its being sought for and desired."<sup>27</sup>

### SUMMARY

As we review what we have studied since the beginning of our course, we may recall the four important principles which we have inferred from our investigation of "being." These principles may be truly said to be the heart of philosophy, and to embrace and synthesize all of metaphysics. We can never begin to philosophize for ourselves without a profound understanding of these. What are they?

From the consideration of "being as such" (*ens in quantum ens*) we came to a knowledge of the *principle of contradiction*.

From the consideration of "limited being" we learned the meaning of the *principle of the limitation of act*; and, consequently, that limited being is composite.

From the consideration of "composite being" we arrived at the truth of the *principle of causality*.

From the consideration of a "caused being," that is, of an effect, we concluded to the necessity of the *principle of finality*.

Finally we may say: Every finite being is intrinsically composite, therefore it is caused by another, therefore it must tend to something besides itself — that is, it is not its own end, but has an end distinct from itself. Infinite being, however, "Subsisting to be" is not composite but absolutely simple; therefore He has no efficient cause,

<sup>26</sup> III, C.G., 3.

<sup>27</sup> "Sicut influere causae efficientis est agere, ita influere causae finalis est appeti et desiderari." (*De Ver.*, XXII, 2c.)

therefore He has no final cause, for He IS: THE FIRST PRINCIPLE AND THE LAST END OF ALL.

### APPENDIX: The Exemplar<sup>28</sup>

The doctrine of the exemplar (*causa exemplaris*), which plays an important part in the natural theology of St. Thomas in his theory of participation, is found best expressed in the *Summa Theologica* in the *Commentary on the Sentences*,<sup>29</sup> and especially in the *De Veritate*.<sup>30</sup> In giving this beautiful doctrine, it will be best merely to quote the words of the great Doctor.

**What Is the Exemplar?** It is "*a form in imitation of which something comes into being from the intention of an agent that determines its end for itself.*"<sup>31</sup>

We must understand that "the form of anything can be understood in a *threefold* way. In the *first place*, the form of a thing is that from which a thing is formed, as the formation of an effect proceeds from the form of the agent. *Secondly*, the form of a thing is that in accordance with which the thing is formed, as the soul is the form of man. In the *third place*, the form of a thing is that for which (in imitation of which) something is formed, and this is the exemplary form to the likeness of which a thing is made. In this meaning the word 'idea' is generally used, so that the 'idea' is the same as the form which a thing imitates."<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, we said in the definition "from the intention of the agent," for "a thing can imitate a form in two ways. The first way is from the intention, as when a painter paints a picture to imitate

<sup>28</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 15. It is worthwhile to read the whole of this question.

<sup>29</sup> *In I Sent.*, dist. 26.

<sup>30</sup> *De Ver.*, III, 1.

<sup>31</sup> "*Forma ad cuius imitationem aliquid fit ex intentione agentis determinantis sibi finem.*" (*De Ver.*, III, a. 1.)

<sup>32</sup> "*Forma alicuius rei dici potest tripliciter. Uno modo a qua formatur res, sicut a forma agentis procedit effectus formatio . . . alio modo dicitur forma alicuius secundum quam aliquid formatur, sicut anima est forma hominis . . . tertio modo dicitur forma alicuius illud ad quod aliquid formatur; et haec est forma exemplaris, ad cuius similitudinem aliquid constituitur; et in hac significatione consuetum est nomen ideae accipi, ut idem sit idea quod forma quam aliquid imitatur.*" (*Loc. cit.*)

the one whose portrait is painted. Sometimes, however, the imitation of which I have spoken happens by accident, without intent on the part of the agent, and merely by chance. Thus it often happens that a painter depicts the likeness of someone without intending it. . . . Hence, since the exemplary form or the 'idea' is that by which a thing is formed, it is necessary that the thing imitate the exemplary form or 'idea' intentionally and not by accident."<sup>33</sup>

Finally, we spoke of an "agent that determines its end for itself."

For a thing acts toward an end in two ways. In the first, the agent determines the end for itself, as happens in all agents that act intellectually. Sometimes, however, the end of the agent is determined by another, the principal agent; for example, this is the case in the flight of an arrow . . . and in like manner, the operation of nature, which is toward some determined end, presupposes an intellect that decided on the end of nature. . . . If, then, a thing is made in imitation of another by an agent which does not determine its own end, the form imitated will not have the formality of an exemplar or an 'idea' in this case . . . but we only use this term when an agent, in acting toward some end, determines the end for itself, whether the form be in the agent or extrinsic to it. We say that the form of the art in the artist is the exemplar of the work of art. Likewise, the same holds true when the form in imitation of which the artist makes anything is extrinsic to the artist.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> "Aliquid potest imitari formam aliquam dupliciter. Uno modo ex intentione; sicut pictura ad hoc fit a pictore, ut imitetur aliquem, cuius figura depingitur. Aliquando autem est praedicta imitatio per accidens praeter intentionem agentis et a casu; sicut frequenter pictores faciunt imaginem alicuius de quo non intendunt. . . . Unde quum forma exemplaris vel idea sit ad quam formatur aliquid, oportet quod formam exemplarem vel ideam aliquid imitetur per se et non per accidens." (Loc. cit.)

<sup>34</sup> "Nam aliquid propter finem dupliciter operatur. Uno modo ita quod ipsum agens determinat sibi finem, sicut est in omnibus agentibus per intellectum; aliquando autem agenti determinatur finis ab alio principali agenti, sicut patet in motu sagittae . . . et similiter operatio naturae, quae est ad determinatum finem, praesupponit intellectum praestituentem finem naturae. . . . Si ergo aliquid fiat ad imitationem alterius per agens quod non determinat sibi finem, non ex hoc forma imitata habebit rationem exemplaris vel ideae . . . sed solum hoc dicimus quando agens propter finem determinat sibi finem, sive illa forma sit in agente, sive extra agentem; dicimus enim formam artis in artifice esse exemplar artificiatum; et similiter etiam formam quae est extra artificem, ad cuius imitationem artifex aliquid facit." (Loc. cit.)

**How Does the Exemplar Differ From the Final Cause?** The question that naturally arises is: How does the exemplar differ from the final cause? It is evident that it differs completely from the efficient cause, but it is not so easily distinguishable from the final. We grant that objectively (*in re*) the end and the idea—as the exemplar is often called—are the same. However, taken in a formal sense, they differ in that the exemplar determines the species of the effect, indeed, it is the specific form of the effect to be imitated and participated, and consequently it is called by philosophers the formal extrinsic cause. On the other hand, the final cause moves the agent to action and determines it to this particular action.

We do not deny, however, that the idea or exemplar has something of finality, for the agent intends to reproduce the same form into the effect: "The perfection of an image," says the Angelic Doctor, "consists in representing the original by its likeness thereto; for this is why an image is made. Therefore, all things are for the purpose of acquiring a divine similitude as their last end."<sup>35</sup>

Finally, we conclude with St. Thomas that the exemplar is a formal cause, not intrinsic but extrinsic, and in a certain sense may be called the "quiddity of the thing that is to be done."<sup>36</sup> "The idea of a work is in the mind of the operator as that which is understood, and not as the image (*species*) whereby he understands, which is a form that makes the intellect in act. For the form of the house in the mind of the builder is something understood by him, to the likeness of which he forms the house in matter."<sup>37</sup>

**Corollary.** We note in passing that Thomas proposes a most beautiful proof of the existence of God from the consideration of the Exemplar. "The fourth way" says the Angelic Doctor, "is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are some less good, true, noble, and the like. But more or

<sup>35</sup> III, C.G., 19.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Met.*, V, c. 2 and 8.

<sup>37</sup> S. *Th.*, I, 15, 2.

less are predicated of different things according as they resemble in their different ways *something which is the maximum*. . . . So that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is *utmost Being*.<sup>38</sup>

## KINDS OF CAUSES AND THEIR DEFINITION

**Material and Formal Causes.** We have not discussed *material* and *formal* causes in this treatise for two reasons. In the first place, we have been dealing with extrinsic causes, and matter and form are intrinsic causes. Moreover, these two intrinsic causes were sufficiently explained in the chapter on act and potency. There we proposed: (1) the necessity for the intrinsic composition of matter and form in corporeal beings, namely, multiplication of individuals in the species; (2) the mutual interdependence of one intrinsic cause upon the other: a transcendental relation; (3) their mutual causality: the form actuating the matter, giving the specific perfection; the matter limiting, individuating the form. We may add that material and formal causality does not consist in action,<sup>39</sup> for action belongs to the agent alone. Nor can it be compared to finality, for the end moves the agent to act and is in the intentional order; the composite being, on the contrary, in which we find material and formal causality, is in the order of existence—it is the effect of the action of the agent. The causality of matter and form consists in a mutual communication of their own particular reality, the matter as a potency, the form as the act, in the order of substance. This causality results in an immediate union of the two principles and it is a most perfect union; for the composite of matter and form exists by an unique substantial “to be.”

**Four Kinds of Causes.** We must say, therefore, with Aristotle that there are only four kinds of causes: material, formal, efficient,

<sup>38</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 2, 3.

<sup>39</sup> A mistake commonly made is to “imagine” formal and material causality in terms of the efficient cause. The reason for this being that we at times are able to experience the manifestation of the action of the agent, whereas no sensible experience can bring a realization of the material or formal causality.

and final, and that all other causes must be reducible to one of these four: the material cause, *out of which* the thing is made; the formal cause, that *by which* something is constituted in its species; the efficient, *that which by its action* produces the being; and the final cause, that *on account of which* the thing is done.

"In one sense," says Aristotle, "that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists is called 'cause' [material], e.g., the bronze of the statue, the silver of the bowl, and the genera of which the bronze and the silver are species. In another sense, the form or the archetype, that is, the statement of the essence, and its genera are called 'causes' [formal], and the parts in the definition. Again, the primary source of the change or coming to rest; e.g., a man who gave advice is a cause [moral efficient], a father is a cause of the child [efficient, physical], and generally what makes is the cause of what is made and what causes change of what is changed. Again, in the sense of *end*, or 'that for the sake of which' a thing is done, e.g., health is the cause of walking about ('Why is he walking about?' we say. 'To be healthy,' and having said that we think we have assigned the cause). . . . This then perhaps exhausts the number of ways in which the term 'cause' is used."<sup>40</sup>

**Definition of Cause.** Having discussed the different kinds of causes together with their respective mode of causality, we are now prepared to give a generic definition of cause. The cause must be said to be: *A principle having some direct influx on the "to be" of another (principium per se influens esse in aliud)*. St. Thomas remarks that a cause "brings some influence on the 'to be' of the thing caused."<sup>41</sup>

**Principle.** We say, then, that cause is a principle. When discussing the question of the principle of contradiction, we indicated that there are different kinds of principles: principles of knowledge, principles of being. We were dealing then with a principle of

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, II, 2, 194b, 23. (Trans. by Hardie and Gaye.) *In II Phys.*, lect. 5.

<sup>41</sup> "*importat influxum quemdam ad esse causati.*" (*In V Met.*, lect. 1, No. 751.)



knowledge, now we are studying a principle of being. Even the final cause must be considered such. For, although it is in the intentional order, it has, nevertheless, a real influx, a real determination upon the action of the agent, not by acting as the agent does but by being desired.

"A principle," says St. Thomas, "is that from which anything in any way proceeds."<sup>42</sup> That which has its origin in a principle is called a principiate (*principiatum*). The procession of the principiate from the principle is twofold: internal and external. It is external when the principiate is related to the principle by mere succession, that is, one comes after the other but in no way depends on the other. It is internal when the principiate somehow emanates from the principle. This can be had in two ways: when the principiate receives from the principle a distinct nature, as in the case of causes, or when the nature is identical as in the divine processions.<sup>43</sup>

**Influx.** The more important part of the definition of cause is, of course, "the influx into the 'to be' of the thing caused." At once it is obvious from our disquisition about principle that while every cause must be said to be a principle, not every principle is a cause. "Principle is wider in extent than cause: for the first part of a motion or a line is called a principle but not a cause."<sup>44</sup> For the cause has an influx upon the "to be" of the thing caused, which indicates real dependence. A mere principle does not have such an influx. In every kind of causality, therefore, not only is there a relation between the principiate (effect) and the principle (cause), but this relation is one of actual dependence.

Because the effect in its "to be" depends on the cause, we must

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<sup>42</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 33, 1.

<sup>43</sup> The composite being which has for its intrinsic principles matter and form has a distinct nature from either of those two causes, e.g., the nature of man is not identical with that of a separated soul. This distinction is called by the scholastics inadequate real as between the whole and its parts.

<sup>44</sup> "*Principium est communius quam causa: nam prima pars motus vel lineae dicitur principium sed non causa.*" (*De Pot.*, X, a. 1, ad 9m.)

admit that cause has a priority of nature. We do not admit, however, priority of time between the effect and the cause as cause. For the cause as cause is actually causing, that is, producing the effect; consequently, the cause cannot be actually causing without an effect.

**Cause, Condition, Occasion.** With St. Thomas we may carefully distinguish between the cause *per se* and the cause *per accidens*. The cause *per accidens* is not a cause at all but merely a condition, *removens prohibens*, or an occasion, *opportunitas agendi*, or a mere coincidence.<sup>45</sup>

**Conclusion.** We conclude this tract on causes with a realization that the knowledge of "being" which formed the reason of our investigation has for its aim the attainment of a clear understanding of the causes of being. We have seen that every being that is material must have four causes, and that in order to understand any particular being I must institute a study of those causes. For every corporal being, since it can be multiplied in its species, must be a composite of matter and form. It depends upon many agents, and ultimately upon God who not only created the world, but must sustain it in existence. Finally, every being must have an end; for its nature is always tending toward a more complete manifestation of the exemplar, the idea in the mind of God.

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. *S. Th.*, I-II, 85, 6c.; in *V Met.*, lect. 3, No. 789.

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## SECTION IV

### THE TRANSCENDENTALS

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#### PROLOGUE

**Being.** The first principle of formal truth is "being," for "being" is "that which the intellect first conceives as being the best known thing and in which it resolves all conceptions."<sup>1</sup> Hence, all further concepts are had by adding<sup>2</sup> somehow to being, that is, by expressing some determination of "being." This we do in predication, for the mode of predication found in any judgment is our criterion of formal truth.<sup>3</sup>

**Predicaments.** There are two ways of "adding" to the concept of "being": by applying it either as a subject of a proposition or as a predicate. In applying it as a predicate we limit the concept of "being" to this or that kind of being. This limitation of "being" is effected by an intrinsic determination of the relation of the essence to the "to be." Thus substance is *this kind of being*; quantity is *this kind of being*, etc. As we shall discover, the predicate can be applied to the subject in ten different ways: all the modes of predication by which various predicates can be applied to the same subject (e.g., Peter) can be reduced to ten supreme kinds or genera of beings. We call these various modes of being *predicaments*. In our last chapter, we shall study these ten predicaments.<sup>4</sup>

**Transcendentals.** The other manner of "adding" to the concept of "being" is had when "being" is taken as the subject of the proposition. There are very few concepts which can be predicated of "being" as such; for any such predicate must necessarily be of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Illud quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum, et in quo omnes conceptiones resolvit." (*De Ver.*, I, 1.)

<sup>2</sup> The expression is Thomas': "*Aliqua dicuntur addere supra ens.*" (*Loc. cit.*)

<sup>3</sup> This was explained in the question of the distinction between act and potency, page 39 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> Predicaments because they indicate modes of predication; they are predicates.

same extension as the subject. And because the subject "being" is a transcendental concept, the predicates, whatever they are, also must be transcendental concepts. Indeed, we shall find that these few attributes of "being" merely express more clearly what was virtually, at least, in the concept of being. What are these concepts that are equally transcendental with "being"? What is it that can be said of every being, besides the fact that it is "that whose act is 'to be' "? Let us turn to the first article of the first question of the *De Veritate*, where this profound problem is clearly explained.

This mode [that is, the mode which can be said of every being] may be understood in either of two ways: First, in so far as it is consequent upon every being in itself, or secondly, in so far as it is consequent upon beings in their relationships to one another. If the first is meant, this is said because it expresses something in being in either a positive or a negative way. In any being it is the essence alone which can be expressed absolutely and affirmatively, and it is in proportion to the essence that existence is predicated of being. Thus is posited the term "thing," which differs from "being" in that, as Avicenna says at the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, the term "being" is taken from the act of existence, whereas the term "thing" expresses the quiddity or essence of the being. The negation, however, which follows every being absolutely is its indivision, a notion expressed by the word "the one"; for oneness is nothing else but the indivision of being.

If this mode of being is referred to in a second sense, that is, according to the relationship of being to being, this again may be spoken of in two ways. First, the separation of one from another, for which we have the expression "something," or to speak more specifically, "some other thing." And so, just as being is said to be one in so far as it is undivided in itself, so one being is said to be something in so far as it is distinct from every other being. Secondly, the suitability of one being to another is to be considered obviously an impossible consideration unless we refer it to that which has of its nature a suitability to every being. I refer here to the soul which in some manner or other becomes all things, as is said in *III De Anima*. Moreover, the soul possesses both an intellectual and an appetitive power. The suitability of being to the appetitive power is declared by the word "the good," as we find in the beginning of

the *Ethics* where it is said: "the good is that which all things desire." On the other hand, the suitability of being to the intellect is expressed by the word "the true."<sup>5</sup>

We conclude, then, with St. Thomas that besides the notion of "being" there are five transcendental concepts: "the thing" (*res*), "the one" (*unum*), "something" (*aliquid*), "the true" (*verum*), and "the good" (*bonum*).

The mode of being, which can be said of every being, can be taken in two ways:

1. If said of every being in itself,
 

either it expresses something	{	affirmatively—"the thing" ( <i>res</i> ); or negatively—"the one" ( <i>unum</i> ).
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2. If said of every being in relation to another being, it expresses either
 

{	separation from another—"something" ( <i>aliquid</i> ); or conformity with another, which means that this other must be able to be somehow all things. This can be said of the soul, which can be- come all things by means either of	{	its intellect—"the true" ( <i>verum</i> ); or of its will—"the good" ( <i>bonum</i> ).
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<sup>5</sup> "Hic modus dupliciter accipi potest: uno modo secundum quod consequitur omne ens in se; alio modo secundum quod consequitur unumquodque ens in ordine ad aliud. Si primo modo, hoc dicitur, quia exprimit in ente aliquid affirmative vel negative. Non autem invenitur aliquid affirmative dictum absolute quod possit accipi in omni ente, nisi essentia eius, secundum quam esse dicitur; et sic imponitur hoc nomen 'res,' quod in hoc differt ab 'ente,' secundum Avicennam in principio *Metaphys.*, quod 'ens' sumitur ab actu essendi, sed nomen 'rei' exprimit quidditatem sive essentiam entis. Negatio autem, quae est consequens omne ens absolute est indivisio; et hanc exprimit hoc nomen 'unum': nihil enim est aliud 'unum' quam ens indivisum. Si autem modus entis accipiatur secundo modo, scilicet secundum ordinem unius ad alterum; hoc potest esse dupliciter. Uno modo secundum divisionem unius ab altero; et hoc exprimit hoc nomen 'aliquid'; dicitur enim aliquid quasi aliud quid; unde sicut ens dicitur unum, in quantum est indivisum in se ita dicitur aliquid, in quantum est ab aliis divisum. Alio modo secundum convenientiam unius entis ad aliud; et hoc quidem non potest esse nisi accipiatur aliquid quod natum sit convenire cum omni ente. Hoc autem est anima, quae quodammodo est omnia, sicut dicitur in III De Anima. In anima autem est vis cogitativa et appetitiva. Convenientiam ergo entis ad appetitum exprimit hoc nomen 'bonum,'



The present section will deal with these three properties of "being": "the one," "the true," "the good." In addition it will also embrace a brief consideration of "the beautiful."

### FIRST QUESTION: Whether "The One" Is a Transcendental Concept?

**Transcendental "One" and Unit of Measurement.** The outstanding difficulty about "the one" arises from the fact that the word "one" in ordinary language means something quite different from transcendental unity. Confusion of these two utterly different concepts has been the source of many errors throughout the ages, errors that have had their serious repercussions on various philosophical questions.<sup>8</sup> In plainer words, the fundamental mistake made by many was that they failed to distinguish sharply between "the one" which signifies indivision of "being," and "one," the mathematical unit of measurement. The difference between these two is very great. "The one" is a transcendental concept, and as such "adds" nothing to the concept of "being" which is not already virtually contained in that concept, and, hence, in no way restricts it. Moreover, since it is a transcendental concept, it is *analogous*; and must necessarily vary in all its predications. "One," the unit of measurement, on the contrary, "adds" to the concept of "being" because, as we shall see, it restricts that concept to a definite class of beings.

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<sup>8</sup> One of the reasons why many refuse to accept the necessity of the limitation of act by potency in order to explain multiplicity within the same species is precisely because they confuse transcendental unity with the principle of number. They see no reason why there could not exist many pure forms (angels) of the same specific nature. We can always distinguish them, they say, by counting them: one, two, etc. Number one is not number two, and that, at least, makes them different. They completely forget that number is based on quantity (extension). Quantity, however, is a property of bodies, precisely because to measure by a common unit we need a univocal foundation. Now matter, the potential principle, by limiting the form, makes it possible to have a multiplicity of individuals capable of being numbered and measured by an univocal unit. But, without matter, we cannot have an univocal unit, and therefore, strictly, the angels cannot be numbered. We can only speak of a multitude of angels.

This is so because it supposes a common foundation for its measure, namely, quantity. Consequently, it is a *univocal* concept and, as a unit of measurement, cannot vary in its predication. This problem is clearly presented by St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologica*:

Some, thinking that "the one" convertible with "being" is the same as "one" which is the principle of number, were divided into contrary opinions. Pythagoras and Plato, seeing that "the one" convertible with "being" did not add any reality to "being," but signified the substance of "being" as undivided, thought that the same applied to "one" which is the principle of number. And because number is composed of unities, they thought that numbers were the substances of all things. Avicenna, on the contrary, considering that "one" which is the principle of number, added a reality to the substance of "being" [otherwise number made of unities would not be a species of quantity], thought that "the one" convertible with "being" added a reality to the substance of "being," as "white" to "man." This, however, is manifestly false, inasmuch as each thing is "one" [in the sense of "the one"] by its substance. For, if a thing were "one" [the one] by anything else but by its substance, since this again would be "one" ["the one"], supposing it were again "one" by another thing, we should be driven on to infinity. Hence we must adhere to the former statement; therefore, we must say that "the one" which is convertible with "being" does not add a reality to being; but that "one" which is the principle of number does add a reality to "being," belonging to the genus of quantity.<sup>9</sup>

**Meaning of Transcendental Unity.** Hence, it is of the greatest importance to find why precisely "the one" which we hold as a transcendental concept differs completely from "one" the principle of number. Perhaps, it will be best here to read what St. Thomas has to say about transcendental unity:

"The one" does not add anything to "being," but is only a negation of division: for "the one" means undivided "being." This is the very reason why "the one" is the same as "being." Now every being is either simple or compound. But what is simple is undivided both actually and potentially. Whereas what is compound, has not

<sup>9</sup> S. Th. I, II, I, ad 1m.



one "to be" while its parts are divided, but afterwards they make up and compose it (for example, the soul and body of man if separated would have different "to be's"). Hence it is manifest that the "to be" of anything consists in indivision; and hence *everything guards its [transcendental] unity as it guards its "to be."*<sup>10</sup>

In a word, "the one" is predicated of any being because of its "to be." Wherefore, "the one" adds nothing real to the concept of "being," but merely denies the division of the "to be."

On the contrary, "one" which is the principle of number does "add" a reality to "being." It adds a determination of the relation between essence and "to be," making it a limited being; it adds, moreover, a further determination of the essence, namely, that it is composed of matter and form, making it a composite essence or nature, which, as such, has quantity for its fundamental property. Hence it is evident that "one" as a unit of measurement can be said only of a restricted number of creatures, and consequently, that it is in no way a transcendental and analogous concept, but supposes an univocity and identity of specific nature.

As we proceed further in our analysis of "the one," we note that although transcendental unity expresses a negation (negation of division), it is nevertheless conceived as if it were a "privation." Indeed a "negation," as such, does not connote a subject. Thus "non-man" might be nothing, or, again, it might be a tree. But "the one," while denying division, does connote the subject "being": for "the one" means undivided being. Therefore, it is a negation conceived as if it were a "privation."

"The one," therefore, that is convertible with being adds nothing to "being" except a denial of division. It does not denote merely lack of division, however, but rather the substance of "being" and this lack. For "the one" is the same thing as "the undivided being." . . . Evidently, then, "the one" that is convertible with "being" posits that being, but adds nothing to it except a denial of division.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *S. Th.*, I, II, I.

<sup>11</sup> "Unum vero quod convertitur cum ente, non addit supra ens nisi negationem divisionis, non quod significet ipsam indivisionem tantum, sed substantiam eius cum

And again: "No privation entirely takes away the 'to be,' because privation means 'negation' in the subject."<sup>12</sup>

**Opinions.** Against this doctrine that "the one" is a transcendental concept, since to the concept of "being" it "adds" only a "negation of division," and should be distinguished from "one," the principle of number, we have already mentioned the theories of Pythagoras, Plato, and Avicenna. Besides these, the Neo-Platonists—especially Plotinus—taught that every being is "one," so that "the one" has at least the same extension as "being." Plotinus, however, goes further than that: he would establish "the one" above "being," in this sense, that "the one" is something positive, higher than "being" in the real order, and that from "THE ONE" everything proceeds. The reason for this curious affirmation is that "being" in the doctrine of the Neo-Platonists is correctly identified with "the intelligible." "The intelligible," however, in their system of philosophy, refers only to the object of the *human* intellect. But the human intellect implies not one but a multitude of concepts. Consequently, the intelligible is many; and "being," therefore, is many. Of necessity, then, there must be "THE ONE," supremely perfect and positive, above all multiplicity which implies imperfection.<sup>13</sup>

It is, no doubt, due to the influence of the Neo-Platonists that Alexander of Hales, St. Bonaventure, and Vasquez taught that "the one" is something positive.

Finally, the Scotists distinguish all the properties of being from "being" by means of their formal distinction (*formalis ex natura rei*).

**Conclusion: The One Is Convertible With Being.** From our dis-

*ipsa; est enim 'unum' idem quod ens indivisum. . . . Patet ergo quod 'unum' quod convertitur cum ente, ponit quidem ipsum ens, sed nihil superaddit, nisi negationem divisionis.*" (*De Pot.*, IX, 7.)

<sup>12</sup> *S. Th.*, I, II, 2, ad 1m.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. a) *Ennead.*, VI, 2, 1: "Quoniam vero ens non unum ponimus." *ὅυχ ἐν φαιέν τὸ ὅν*; b) *Ennead.*, VI, 9, 2: "Omnino autem unum quidem existit primum, sed intellectus speciesque et ens primi esse non possunt." *ὅλως δὲ τὸ μὲν ἐν τὸ πρῶτον ὁ δὲ νοῦς καὶ τὰ εἶδη καὶ τὸ ὄν ὅν πρῶτα.*

cussion of "the one" there is no further need of refuting these doctrines last proposed, and we conclude with St. Thomas that "the one" is convertible with "being." "A thing is in so far as it is one."<sup>14</sup>

**Corollary.** Since the concept of "the one" is analogous, we shall find that it must vary in accordance with the nature of the unity of the particular being of which it is predicated. This unity, as we explained, is determined by the relation of the essence to the "to be." "Everything guards its unity as it guards its 'to be.'"<sup>15</sup> God, therefore, is absolutely one, *maxime unum*, because He is the "subsisting to be." All other beings are one more or less perfectly by reason of the "to be" which is proportioned to a nature that is more or less composite.

**Various Unities.** Moreover, we speak of perfect union *unum per se* and imperfect union *unum per accidens*. The first is had by means of a unique substantial "to be" actuating the essence, so that such a being (e.g., angel, man, Peter) cannot be said *actually* to contain many in that same order in which it is said to be one. A man, for example, is not many men actually. On the contrary, the imperfect one *unum per accidens* has more than one "to be," so that in the order in which it is said to be one it contains several "to be's" in act. For example, a Doctor supposes the substance "man," with its substantial "to be," and the quality "learning" with its accidental "to be."

We also speak of an accidental one (*unum accidentale*) when a union is had between several individual substances, each of which retains its individual "to be." Such a unity is, therefore, a unity of aggregation (as a heap of stones), or of order (as the union of the members of a business firm). Again, this kind of unity may be had by reason of an external and, therefore, accidental form which is called *figura*. A house, for example, has such union. "Those things," says Thomas, "which are distinct in substance, and one according

<sup>14</sup> "Unumquodque in tantum est, in quantum unum est." (S. Th., I, 103, 3.)

<sup>15</sup> "Unumquodque, sicut custodit suum esse, ita custodit suam unitatem." (S. Th., I, 11, 1c.)

to an accident, are unqualifiedly distinct (*simpliciter*), and one in a certain respect (*secundum quid*): thus many men are one people, and many stones are one heap, which is unity of composition or order. In like manner, also, many individuals that are one in genus and species are unqualifiedly many and one in a certain respect: since to be one in genus or species is to be one according to the consideration of reason."<sup>16</sup>

## SECOND QUESTION: Whether "The True" Is a Transcendental?

**Formal Truth.** "The true" (*verum*) denotes that toward which the intellect tends. The perfection of the intellect is to know "the true"; for it is made to know reality, and to know reality is to possess "the true." This perfection of the intellect is attained in the judgment; for the judgment is the perfect act of the human intellect. Consequently, St. Thomas affirms that "the perfection of the intellect is the truth as known." And, "when it [the intellect] judges that a thing corresponds to the form which it apprehends about that thing, then first it knows and expresses 'the true' (*verum*). This is done by composing and dividing. . . . Therefore, properly speaking 'truth' (*veritas*) resides in the intellect composing and dividing; and not in the senses; nor in the intellect knowing 'what a thing is.'"<sup>17</sup>

"Truth" is the abstract aspect of "the true" (*veritas est ratio veri*). It is the known conformity of the intellect representing the object as it is in itself. "Truth," therefore, primarily (*per prius*) is said of the intellect; and consequently when we speak of formal (logi-

<sup>16</sup> "Quae vero sunt diversa secundum substantiam, et unum secundum accedens, sunt diversa simpliciter, et unum secundum quid: sicut multi homines sunt unus populus, et multi lapides sunt unus acervus, quae est unitas compositionis aut ordinis. Similiter etiam multa individua, quae sunt unum genere vel specie, sunt simpliciter multa, et secundum quid unum; nam esse unum genere vel specie, est esse unum secundum rationem." (S. Th., I-II, 17, 4c.)

<sup>17</sup> S. Th., I, 16, 2c.; cf. *Perihermenias*, I, 3.

cal) truth, we mean the correspondence of my known knowledge to the object.

**Transcendental Truth.** "Truth" secondarily (*per posterius*) is said of the object.<sup>18</sup> We call this truth transcendental or ontological truth. We speak of an object as true when it corresponds to the idea of its maker. "For a house is said to be true that expresses the likeness of the form in the architect's mind; and words are said to be true in so far as they are the signs of truth in the intellect. In the same way, natural things are said to be true in so far as they express the likeness of the species that are in the divine mind. For a stone is called true which possesses the nature proper to a stone, according to the preconception of the divine intellect."<sup>19</sup>

Transcendental truth, therefore, is the conformity of an object to an intellect to which it is related. For, says St. Thomas: "A thing understood may be in relation to an intellect either essentially (*per se*) or accidentally (*per accidens*). It is related essentially (*per se*) to an intellect on which it depends<sup>20</sup> as regards its 'to be.'" Therefore, transcendental truth essentially (*per se*) means order to the divine intellect since every creature depends upon the divine intellect as regards its "to be." It is related accidentally (*per accidens*) to an intellect by which it is knowable.

"Now we do not judge of a thing by what it is accidentally, but by what it is essentially. Hence, everything is said to be true essentially, in so far as it is related to the intellect from which it depends."<sup>21</sup>

**Truth Per Se.** Applying these principles, we must say that every being is true essentially because of its relation to the divine intel-

<sup>18</sup> "Since 'the true' is in the intellect in so far as it (the intellect) is conformed to the object understood (*rei intellectae*), the abstract aspect of 'the true' (*ratio veri*) must needs pass from the intellect to the object understood, so that the thing understood is said to be true in so far as it has some relation to the intellect." (S. Th., I, 16, 1, c.)

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Or with which it is identical, as in the case of God's essence which is not distinct from His intellect.

<sup>21</sup> *Loc. cit.*

lect. By considering the hierarchy of beings, we learn that the divine essence is most perfectly true, that it is, indeed, truth itself, since the relation of the divine essence to the divine intellect is one of identity.<sup>22</sup> All creatures are true because of their relation to the divine intellect. As for artificial products, the result of the work of man, they depend on the intellect of God absolutely (*simpliciter*) by reason of their actuation in the order of existence. They depend, however, on the human mind of the artist, architect, or artisan in their being "such" (*tale*). Note well that the dependence spoken of does not refer to efficient causality, but to exemplar causality, which is in the order of formal causes.

**Truth Per Accidens.** We have already explained that all things because they are intelligible and, consequently, have an order (relation) to the created intellect, are said to be true accidentally.

**"The True" Is a Transcendental.** We conclude that every being is true (transcendentally), because every being must correspond to the idea of its maker (God), and because every being is intelligible. For "every being in as far as it participates in the 'to be' (*in quantum habet de esse*), so far is it knowable,"<sup>23</sup> and, consequently, "the true" is a transcendental and analogous concept, a property of "being" which is convertible with being. "Truth which is in a thing itself is nothing else but the entity as it is related to the intellect, or relates the intellect to itself."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The transcendental truth of the divine essence is peculiarly its own: "The truth of our intellect is according to its conformity with its principle, that is to say, to the things from which it receives knowledge. The truth, also, of things is according to their conformity with their principle, namely, the divine intellect. Now this cannot be said, properly speaking, of divine truth; unless perhaps in so far as truth is appropriated to the Son who has a principle. But if we speak of truth in its essence (*si de veritate essentialiter dicta loquamur*), we cannot understand this unless the affirmative be resolved into the negative, as when one says: 'the Father is of Himself, because He is not from another.' Similarly, the divine truth can be called a 'likeness to the principle,' *inasmuch as His 'to be' is not dissimilar to His intellect.*" (I, 16, 5, ad 2m.)

<sup>23</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 16, 3c.

<sup>24</sup> "*Veritas quae est in ipsa re, nihil aliud est quam entitas intellectui adaequata vel intellectum sibi adaequans.*" (*De Ver.*, I, 4c.)

**SCHOLION: What Does "The True" Add to the Concept of "Being"?**

It is evident that since "the true" is a transcendental concept, and, consequently, predicable of all beings, it cannot consist in a mere relation; for if that were so, "the true" would be limited to a very definite kind or genus of being, the genus of "relation" which is an accidental predicament. We must assert, therefore, that "the true" signifies "being," in so far as "being" is the foundation and basis for a relation to intellect.

In just what the nature of this relation to the intellect consists is an obscure problem and one not easily solved. Remer<sup>25</sup> seems to think that it should be a transcendental relation. This, however, is difficult to grant, since a transcendental relation is based upon a mutual exigency between principles of being and consequently is had only between act and potency; moreover, it is a most real relation, and as necessary on the part of the act as it is on the part of the potency. But how God is necessarily related to creatures as their act is impossible to conceive.

Others contend that this relation is real and predicamental. Here again, we do not understand how this theory would be of any help. It merely removes the problem a step further and offers no solution. For this real predicamental relation, having an entity of its own (as we shall see in the next section), is a being, and as such it is true. Therefore, it must be ordered to the intellect, but that in turn requires another relation. This new relation, accordingly, would be the basis for still another relation, and so on indefinitely (*ad infinitum*).

Consequently, we prefer the solution proposed by Father René Arnou:<sup>26</sup> In the first place, transcendental truth, which is the

<sup>25</sup> V. Remer, S.J., *Ontologia*, p. 97 et seq. (Romae: Univ. Greg., 1932, 7th ed.)

<sup>26</sup> R. Arnou, S.J., *Metaphysica Generalis*, p. 106. (Romae: Univ. Greg., 1939.) This is the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor: "*Verum et bonum non possunt addere (enti) nisi relationem quae sit rationis tantum.*" (*De Ver.*, XXI, 1c.)

truth of "being as such" adds to "being" a *relation of reason* to the intellect to which it is referred.<sup>26a</sup> In regard to the human intellect, this can only be the relation of "the one measuring to the measured,"<sup>27</sup> and, therefore, can be only a relation of reason. In regard to the divine intellect, the relation will have to be a relation of "measurable being" (*mensurabilis*), and not of the thing measured (*mensurati*), because "being as such" abstracts from all mensuration since it is infinite in its extension. When, however, the thing considered is no longer "being as such" but a creature, then "the true" or the fact that this object is true transcendently necessitates a real relation to the intellect from which it depends and is measured.<sup>28</sup>

### THIRD QUESTION: Whether "The Good" Is Transcendental?

"The good" is in the order of the end, and in that sense we say that "the good" is supreme, for the end is the cause of causes.

**Definition.** What is "the good"? Is "the good" the supreme principle? "The good," explains St. Thomas, "is the formal aspect of perfection."<sup>29</sup> Now "something is desirable in so far as it is perfect."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, "the good is that which is desired." Hence the definition given by Aristotle as well as Thomas: "the good is that which everyone desires." This does not mean, of course, that every good is desired by everyone, but that the good indicates perfection, and that in itself it is desirable; consequently, "whatever is desired has the aspect of 'the good.'"<sup>31</sup>

**As the End, the Good Is in the Intentional Order.** It is evident,

<sup>26a</sup> Fr. Giuseppe Mauri, S.J., in his *Lectiones Philosophiae Scholasticae* (*Manuscriptum*, Venetiis, 1907), p. 286 ff., suggests that transcendental truth is being considered with respect to a relation to *intellect as such*. Thus I can consider being absolutely as being or thing; and I can also consider it with respect to its relation to intellect without determining whether that intellect is divine or created.

<sup>27</sup> "*Relatio mensurantis ad mensuratum.*" This is taken in the sense of the exemplar not of the efficient cause.

<sup>28</sup> "*Measured.*" Here again we mean in a formal sense, that is, it participates.

<sup>29</sup> "*Bonum dicitur rationem perfecti.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 5, 1, ad 1m.)

<sup>30</sup> "*Unumquodque est appetibile, secundum quod est perfectum.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 5, 1c.)

<sup>31</sup> "*Quidquid appetitur rationem boni habet.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 6, 2, ad 2m.)



then, that "the good" is ordered to the appetite, that it establishes a foundation and determination of finality, and, because of its relation to the will, it must be said to be in the intentional order. This is not to say, of course, that "the good" in its objective reality is in the order of the intellect and the will. For "the good" in so far as it indicates the formal aspect of perfection is reality itself; indeed, "nothing is good except in so far as it is by participation similar to the Supreme Good."<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, in so far as being places a relation to the will, it is desired, and the desire of an object not yet possessed is in the intentional order; for that which is desired is not precisely the object, but the possession of the object. In that sense "the good" may be said to be in the intentional order; and in that sense it must be said to be the end. God Himself, therefore, is the supreme end, since He is the supreme good. Hence "we may say that all things in a certain sense desire the supreme good, since nothing is good except in so far as it is similar to the supreme good."<sup>33</sup>

**Is the Good Higher Than Being?** Considered as the end, that is, in the intentional order, "the good may be said to be higher than 'being.'"<sup>34</sup> "It must be said that 'the good' extends to existing and non-existing things, not so far as it can be predicated of them, but so far as it can cause them. . . . For 'the good' has the aspect of the end. . . ."<sup>35</sup> Now 'being' implies a relation [*habitus*] of a formal cause only, either inherent or exemplar."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "A primo igitur per suam essentiam ente et bono, unumquodque potest dici bonum et ens, in quantum participat ipsum." (S. Th., I, 6, 4c.)

<sup>33</sup> In I Eth., lect. 1, No. 11.

<sup>34</sup> It may be that this represents the mind of Plato, whose allocation of "the good" has long been a controverted point. Plato's metaphysics was strongly moral, and this led him to place "the good" (as final cause), above "being" or essence, because "the good" is the ultimate reason (*ratio*) for the existence of being.

<sup>35</sup> It is in the manner of the end, therefore, that we must understand the celebrated phrase "It is of the nature of 'the good' to communicate itself" (*bonum est diffusivum sui eo modo quo finis dicitur movere*. I, V, 4, ad 2m). This is taken in a larger sense than the operation of the agent, which merely communicates its form. It is, then, quite different for a being to act as an efficient cause and to be "the good," that is, the end. As agent it is a principle, a beginning (*initium*); as

**The Good, a Transcendental.** "The good," therefore, is a property of "being" and convertible with it. Consequently, it is a transcendental.

That every being is good may be proved as follows:

(1) "Every being, as being, is good. For all beings, as being, have actuality and are in some way perfect; since every act implies some sort of perfection, and perfection implies desirability and the good. Hence it follows that every being as such is good."<sup>37</sup>

(2) That every good is being may be shown in this wise:

"The good includes the notion of being"<sup>38</sup> — namely, as a foundation for a relation to the appetite. Again, "the good is *being* as perfective of another as an end."<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, "the good" adds to the concept of "being" a relation of reason to the appetite.<sup>40</sup> But nothing can move the appetite unless it exists or has order to the "to be." Therefore, every good is being.

Every being is good, every good is being; *being*, therefore, and "the good" are convertible. Moreover, "the good" is a property of being because it supposes being and adds to it a relation of reason to the appetite.

**Division.** While we must never forget that "the good" and being are convertible, we may, nevertheless, establish a division within "the good" itself. This is the illuminating distinction of "the good"

"the good," the end, it is perfection and measure. For a thing attains the end according to its entire "to be" and not merely according to the assimilation of the form. (Cf. *De Ver.*, XXI, 1, ad 4m.)

<sup>36</sup> "*Dicendum quod bonum extenditur ad existentia et non-existentia, non secundum praedicationem, sed secundum causalitatem; ut per non-existentia intelligamus non ea simpliciter quae penitus non sunt, sed ea quae sunt in potentia et non in actu; quia bonum habet rationem finis, in quo non solum quiescunt quae sunt in actu, sed ad ipsum moventur quae in actu non sunt, sed in potentia tantum. Ens autem non importat habitudinem causae nisi formalis tantum, vel inhaerentis, vel exemplaris, cuius causalitas non se extendit nisi ad ea quae sunt in actu.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 5, 2, ad 2m.)

<sup>37</sup> "*Perfectum vero habet rationem appetibilis et boni.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 5, 3.)

<sup>38</sup> "*Bonum rationem entis includit.*" (*De Ver.*, XXI, 2.)

<sup>39</sup> "*Dicitur bonum ens perfectivum alterius per modum finis.*" (*De Ver.*, XXI, 1.)

<sup>40</sup> "*Verum et bonum non possunt addere (enti) nisi relationem quae sit rationis tantum.*" (*Ibid.*)

into the *virtuous* (*honestum*), the *useful* (*utile*), and the *pleasant* (*delectabile*). After comparing the movement of the appetite to that of a natural body, and considering this movement by reason of its term, St. Thomas distinguishes between the absolute term of that movement — that at which the movement comes to the end, and the relative terms through which it comes to the end. Again, he says, “the ultimate term of movement can be taken in two ways, either as the thing itself toward which it tends, e.g., a place or form; or the state of rest in that thing.” Having established these three terms, he applies his deductions to the movement of the appetite:

Thus, in the movement of the appetite, the thing desired that terminates the movement of the appetite relatively as a means by which something tends toward another is called the *useful* (*utile*) but that sought after as the last thing absolutely terminating the movement of the appetite, as a thing toward which for its own sake the appetite tends, is called the *virtuous* (*honestum*); for the virtuous is that which is desired for its own sake; but that which terminates the movement of the appetite in the form of rest in the thing desired, is called the *pleasant* (*delectabile*).<sup>41</sup>

This distinction is of great importance in the study of moral philosophy. The virtuous is supreme; it is “the good” unqualifiedly. The delectable is a good that is dependent, and, consequently, should not rule as the supreme end; thirdly, the useful is merely a means, and should be treated as such. So that the proper order should be (1) the virtuous; (2) the pleasant; (3) the useful.<sup>42</sup>

#### SCHOLION: Concerning Evil

“One opposite is known through the other, as darkness is known through light. Hence also what evil is must be known from the nature of the good.”<sup>43</sup> Logically, therefore, the question of evil must follow our investigation of “the good.”

Like all great philosophers, St. Thomas was much interested in

<sup>41</sup> S. Th., I, 5, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. S. Th., II-II, 145, 3; I-II, 2, 6, ad 1m; I-II, 4, 2, ad 1m.

<sup>43</sup> S. Th., I, 48, 1.

the nature of evil, whether physical or moral. He devotes two entire questions in the *Summa Theologica* to this mysterious problem, and has a treatise entitled *De Malo* among the *Quaestiones Disputatae*.

**What Is Evil.** In studying the philosophy of "being," we are primarily interested, of course, in the ontological aspect of evil. Is it something? Has it a nature? Or is it absolutely nothing, a mere figment of the imagination? We know that these opposite views have been accepted throughout the ages by diverse sects. There were the Manicheans, to mention only one, who looked upon evil as something positive, and who held fast to the belief that there was a supreme principle of evil equally as powerful as the principle of good. On the other hand, even today, we find that the philosophical basis or rather the unphilosophical basis of "Christian Science" is that evil is a mere dream, the invention of a disordered mind.

The truth of the matter stands between these extremes. Evil is not something positive, nor is it absolutely nothing: it is merely a lack of good, the absence of a perfection which should be had by a particular nature. Evil is what St. Thomas calls a "*privation*." Here is his explanation:

Evil imports the absence of good. But not every absence of good is evil. For absence of good can be taken in a privative and in a negative sense. Absence of good taken negatively is not evil; otherwise it would follow that what does not exist is evil, and also that everything would be evil, through not having the good belonging to something else; for instance, a man would be evil who had not the swiftness of the roe or the strength of the lion. But the absence of good taken in a privative sense is an evil; as for instance, the privation of sight (in man) is called blindness.<sup>44</sup>

From this we conclude that evil (and we speak primarily of physical evil) in its formal aspect does not consist in something positive, nor in a mere negation, but in the *privation* of a perfec-

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<sup>44</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 48, 3.

tion due to a subject. Wherefore, we must affirm that evil is in "the good" as in a subject.

**Division.** Before speaking of the cause of evil, we should distinguish clearly between *physical* and *moral* evil. *Physical* evil is the privation of a physical perfection (absolute or relative) which the subject should have. It is absolute when it includes no aspect of "the good" in its formal concept, as, for example, blindness in man. Relative physical evil, on the contrary, while showing a lack of the proper order or proportion due to the subject, may in itself be a certain good, but not to this particular subject nor at this time, as, for example, obesity.

*Moral* evil deprives a rational creature of the proper order to the end (*remotio debiti finis*). It is, therefore, also a privation; not, however, in the physical order, but in the moral, the order of the end.

St. Thomas has a further distinction for evil that pertains to the things of the will (*in rebus voluntariis*), which he says can be either the evil of penalty (*poena*) or the evil of fault (*culpa*). We find an excellent example of these in hellfire (evil of penalty) and opposition of the will to the fulfillment of divine will and to divine love (evil of fault). "It is plain, therefore, that God is the author of the evil of pain but not of the evil of fault. . . . It is also plain that fault has more evil in it than pain has."<sup>45</sup>

**Cause.** Finally, a word about the cause of evil. Obviously, there can be no cause of evil *per se*, that is, no cause intending evil as evil, for the end must always be conceived under the aspect of the good (*bonum habet rationem finis*). Only the good can move the appetite. Consequently, what is desired and what is sought by the agent is not evil as such, but something that has the aspect of good, that is conceived as good, whether it be a true good or merely an apparent good (*bonum apparens*).

Hence, there can be a cause of evil only *per accidens*. That is to

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<sup>45</sup> *S. Th.*, I, 48, 6.

say, evil cannot be caused by intending it as such, but only by intending good. It is in this sense we assert that evil has its efficient cause, which is "the good." Whenever evil is caused by an agent, we find that this is generally due to a defect in the action of the agent. Sometimes, however, when the action of the agent is perfect as with God, evil must be attributed to the subject of evil by reason of the indisposition of the matter.<sup>46</sup>

Can God be the cause of evil? He can be the cause *per accidens* of physical evil, not because of any defect in His action, for in God there is no imperfection, but because in causing a higher good, namely the good of the universe, he must cause *per accidens* the corruptions of material things which for the individual thing must be considered an evil. In the same sense in the creation of a place of eternal punishment for sinners, He must be considered the cause *per accidens* of a physical evil. What He intends is not the evil as evil, but the good of the universe.

It is evident that God cannot be the cause, not even *per accidens*, of the evil of fault or moral evil. The reason is that God cannot be opposed to the fulfillment of the divine will.

By way of summary, then, we may say:

Evil cannot have a final cause, for the end is "the good."

Evil cannot have a formal cause, for it is a "privation."

Evil has a material cause (in a broad sense, that is, subject of a privation), scil. the subject which is good.

Evil has an efficient cause *per accidens*, the agent which is good.

"The good," therefore, is both material cause (as subject of a privation) and efficient cause (*per accidens* as agent) of evil.

#### APPENDIX: Concerning "The Beautiful"<sup>47</sup>

St. Thomas is primarily a theologian, not an artist. The contemplation of "the beautiful," which in the life of man on this

<sup>46</sup> Cf. I, 49, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*; Gerald B. Phelan, "The Concept of Beauty in St. Thomas," *Some Aspects of the New Scholastic Philosophy*, edited by Charles A. Hart (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1932).

earth is restricted largely to material beauty, does not seem to have greatly concerned him. His interest lies in the study of the ultimate truths rather than in the contemplation of sensible beauty. Consequently, we look in vain in his works for an articulate, a complete theory of beauty. He has, however, here and there, sometimes in a short aside remark, sometimes in a *responsio ad tertium*, words and phrases clearly indicative of the orientation of his philosophy of beauty. We shall find in these texts sufficient matter to guide us in our search.

**Intuition of the Beautiful.** We may note in the first place, that while "the beautiful" is transcendental—"nothing exists that is not beautiful"—<sup>48</sup> and that in themselves all things must be said to have beauty, still the contemplation and appreciation of beauty is for men on this earth a very limited affair. Why?

The reason is fairly obvious. Contemplation of beauty is founded on an intuition, for "those things are beautiful which being seen please."<sup>49</sup> This definition, like all true definitions, must be taken in a formal sense. The expression "being seen" is highly important. It means that the object must be seen, not merely known in its abstract universal nature. It must be known as it is in itself, as an individual, and therefore immediately, by means of an *intuition*. Now *naturally* speaking, the only intuition, the only immediate knowledge of an object man may have in this life is of a form which is in matter. This, of course, is due to the nature of man's knowledge which begins with the senses and is primarily caused by a material object. Intellectual intuition, to be an intuition, must be immediate. It cannot, therefore, be had by judgment and reasoning.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, the object of such an intuition must be

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<sup>48</sup> Literally "nothing is that does not participate 'the beautiful.'" (*Nihil est quod non participat pulchro.*) In *Dion. De Nomin. Divin.*, c. IV, lect. 5.

<sup>49</sup> "*Quae visa placent.*" (*S. Th.*, I, q. V, a. 4, ad 1m.)

<sup>50</sup> Our intellect, due to the nature of its abstraction, does not ordinarily cognize the individual except by a sort of return to the phantasm. Such knowledge, however, is not intuitive since it supposes a series of distinct acts. Cf. Brennan, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

something that becomes immediately known to the intellect through the senses,<sup>51</sup> namely, a material individual. Note well, we do not say, as many of the moderns do, that the contemplation of beauty in this life is merely a sensuous act. On the contrary, with Maritain, we speak rather of intellectualized sensations, or sublimated sensations<sup>52</sup> in which and by means of which the intellect, as it were, beyond itself (due to the splendor of the form of the object cognized, and to the dispositive conditions of the knowing subject), is able to come directly in contact by means of an intuition, a vague apprehension<sup>53</sup> with its true object. This object is not an universal nature, but the thing as it is, the individual. In the intuition of its object, in the apprehension of the individual, the knowing subject experiences a profound joy, a very great delight; and that is why the "beautiful" is said to be the good of the intellect, *bonum intellectus*.

We must, then, clearly distinguish in this question two problems. First: What is "the beautiful," is it a transcendental? And the second: Why and when and how does a man attain beauty? The second question is largely psychological, and beyond the few remarks we have made above we shall not consider it. The first belongs to our treatise, for we are dealing not with the subjective reactions of man, but with objective realities, with "being."

**Whether Beauty Is a Transcendental?** "The beautiful," we said, is that "which being seen, pleases." Were we to "see" the object as it is, as an individual, we should experience this great joy, in the knowledge of every individual. "The beautiful is that whose ap-

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<sup>51</sup> "Those senses chiefly regard the beautiful, which are the most cognitive, viz., sight and hearing, as ministering to reason." *"Illi sensus praecipue respiciunt pulchrum qui maxime cognoscitivi sunt, scilicet visus et auditus rationi deservientes."* (S. Th., I-II, 27, 1, ad 3m.)

<sup>52</sup> "Pour entendre cela, représentons-nous que c'est l'intelligence et le sens ne faisant qu'un, ou si l'on peut ainsi parler, le 'sens intelligencié,' qui donne lieu dans le coeur à la joie esthétique." (Maritain, *Art et Scholastique*, Paris: Rouart, 1927, p. 254.)

<sup>53</sup> This experience of the individual is often so vague that it cannot be translated into words, and is not capable of being analyzed.



prehension pleases."<sup>54</sup> The meaning of St. Thomas is clear: If the object is seen, then delight will immediately follow. The reason for the limitation of our perception of the beautiful is that we are unable "to see," "to intuit." At most, the best we can do is to know the definition of a nature, and to come back by a round-about way to the phantasm. All things, therefore, are beautiful in themselves. "There is nothing that does not participate of the beautiful and of the good, since every one is beautiful and good according to its own form."<sup>55</sup> Every being, then, is beautiful because of its form that is appropriate (*conveniens*) to itself, since that form is a faint participation of the one (God) who is beauty itself.

**The Beautiful Differs From the Good and the True.** How does "the beautiful" differ from "the true" and from "the good"? It differs from "the good" in this, that "the good" is that which quiets the appetite when *possessed*, whereas "the beautiful" quiets the appetite when *known*, and that is why we call it the good of the intellect, *bonum intellectus*.<sup>56</sup>

Moreover, "the beautiful" differs also from "the true" since it adds this transport of delight, which "the true," as such, does not give. We do not deny that knowledge as such, even of the most abstract nature, can give and does give great satisfaction, for the intellect is made to know. But there is a vast difference between the satisfaction which comes from the acquisition of scientific knowledge which is laboriously obtained by demonstration, and which is only an incitement to greater knowledge, and the transcendent and overpowering delight which transports man and, at least for a few short moments, finds its term in the vision of sensible beauty.

<sup>54</sup> "*Pulchrum dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.*" (S. Th., I-II, 27, 1, ad 3m.)

<sup>55</sup> "*Nihil est quod non participat pulchro et bono, cum unumquodque sit pulchrum et bonum secundum propriam formam.*" (In Dion. De Nomin. Divin., c. IV, lect. 5.)

<sup>56</sup> "*Pulchrum est idem bono sola ratione differens. Cum enim bonum sit quod omnia appetunt, de ratione boni est quod in eo quietetur appetitus. Sed ad rationem pulchri pertinet quod in eius aspectu quietetur apprehensio.*" (S. Th., I-II, 27, 1, ad 3m.)

We say, nevertheless, that "the beautiful" partakes both of the "good" and of the "true." It partakes of "the good" because it quiets the appetite; and of "the true" because it is knowledge, vision, objective union.<sup>57</sup> "The beautiful," therefore, although transcendental, is not a distinct transcendental<sup>58</sup> concept for it is contained in the notion of "the true" and of "the good."

**Objective Beauty.** Every being is beautiful, but because not everything can be perceived by us as being beautiful, it follows that not every being delights us when perceived. We have already shown the reasons for the limitations of our perception of the beautiful due to our mode of knowledge, and to the natural dispositions of the knowing subject. There are, however, besides these subjective conditions, others more objective that are also required for the *human perception* of beauty. St. Thomas explains what they are: "Beauty includes three conditions, *integrity* or *perfection*, since those things which are impaired are by the very fact ugly; *due proportion* or *harmony*; and lastly *brightness* or *clarity*."<sup>59</sup> These are the objective conditions required for our human perception of beauty. But, of course, much depends on the subjective dispositions and talents of the individual subject.<sup>60</sup>

Our doctrine of the objectivity of "the beautiful" is of great importance, for to make beauty a purely subjective experience as the idealists and the evolutionists have done, following Kant's har-

<sup>57</sup> "Thus it is evident that 'the beautiful' adds to 'the good' a relation to the cognitive faculty, so that 'the good' means that which simply pleases the appetite; while 'the beautiful' is something whose apprehension delights." "*Et sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum quemdam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam; ita quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitui, pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet.*" (*Loc. cit.*)

<sup>58</sup> Every being is beautiful, and "the beautiful" is "being."

<sup>59</sup> "*Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas, sive perfectio; quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt; et debita proportio, sive consonantia, et iterum claritas.*" (*S. Th.*, I, q. 39, a. 7.)

<sup>60</sup> Thomas distinguishes between *contemplatio veri* in the abstract, and *visio pulchri* in the concrete. As men, our perception of beauty is limited, but our intellect because of the elevation of grace may attain joys undreamed of by mere man. But this pertains to mystical contemplation which has no place in our treatise. Cf. Maritain, *Les degrés du savoir*, p. 737 et seq. (Paris: Desclé, 1932.)

monious activity of the senses, is an implicit denial of the objectivity of truth. Augustine has a glorious sentence to express the objectivity of "the beautiful": "And first I shall ask whether these things are beautiful because they give delight, or whether they give delight because they are beautiful. It is clear to me, without doubt, that they delight because they are beautiful."<sup>61</sup>

In moral philosophy we can see at once the importance of this doctrine of the objectivity of beauty. All things are beautiful in themselves; in like manner, all things are good in themselves. But not all things are good for us, even though good and beautiful in themselves. Consequently, in the domain of art (we are speaking here not about the intellectual habit of art, but the artifact), to discuss, as many have, whether a thing may be beautiful and still immoral is wholly inconsequential, and shows a failure to realize the meaning of the problem of morality. The morality of the object (in my regard) in no way depends on its objective beauty which fundamentally means being, and adds to it a relation to the intellect and to the appetite. Something may very well be objectively beautiful, but because of the fallen nature of man, because of original sin, because of our individual characteristics such an object may be profoundly dangerous and even immoral. The words of St. Thomas on this question are extremely clear: "Hence we see that a certain picture may be said to be beautiful, even if the object represented be foul."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> "Et prius quaeramus utrum ideo pulchra sint quia delectent, an ideo delectent quia pulchra sint. Hic mihi sine dubitatione respondebitur, ideo delectare quia pulchra sunt." (*De Vera Religione*, c. 32.)

<sup>62</sup> "Unde videmus quod aliqua imago dicitur esse pulchra si perfecte representat rem quavis turpem." (*S. Th.*, I, q. 39, a. 8.)

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## SECTION V

### THE PREDICAMENTS

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#### PROLOGUE

In this last section of our treatise on the *Philosophy of Being*, we shall direct our study to the interesting problem of the predicaments. Several questions, of course, immediately present themselves: What are the predicaments? Why is it important to study them? What connection have they with the problem of "being"?

**A Problem of Predication.** To begin with, we should recall that the problem of reality with respect to man is always a problem of predication. Let us state this problem as St. Thomas does in the first article of *De Veritate*. From the consideration of "being," that is, from the judgments we are able to form from such consideration, we find that there are two ways by which we may express the various modes of "being." One by which we discovered the very few concepts that may be predicated of the transcendental notion of "being." These are called the transcendentals. But besides this there is another way, in which "the mode expressed is some special mode of 'being'; for there are diverse grades of entity according as they receive diverse modes of 'to be'; and following these modes are understood diverse genera of things; substance, for example, does not add any difference to 'being,' but by the name of *substance* is expressed precisely a special mode of existing (being), that is, being *per se*, and so it is for the other genera."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, what we are seeking here is to find precisely how many supreme orders or relations to the "to be" there are that can be

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<sup>1</sup>"*Uno modo ut modus expressus sit aliquis specialis modus entis: sunt enim diversi gradus entitatis, secundum quod accipiuntur diversi modi essendi; et iuxta hos modos accipiuntur diversa rerum genera; substantia enim non addit supra ens aliquam differentiam, quae significet aliquam naturam superadditam enti; sed nomine substantiae exprimitur quidem specialis modus essendi, scilicet per se ens; et ita est in aliis generibus.*" (*De Ver.*, I, 1.)

predicated univocally of a number of subjects,<sup>2</sup> so as to form a supreme genus, in the true sense. We shall find, as we proceed with our analysis, that there are ten such various orders of essence to the "to be," and, consequently, ten general modes of restricting the transcendental and analogous notion of being, so as to make it predicable of its inferiors in an univocal sense. These ten supreme genera of being are the *predicaments*.<sup>3</sup>

N.B. We must carefully note the meanings of the terms: *predicate*, *predicables*, and *predicaments*. *Predicate* is that which is affirmed or denied of a subject; *predicables* are five common modes according to which predicates can be applied or attributed to a subject; *predicaments* are the supreme genera of *predicates*.

We must also be careful to distinguish between the predicaments logically considered and the predicaments as they are in the real order.

(a) *Logical* predicaments are had when considered as genera in reference to their inferiors, according to their mode of predication. These belong to the first three classes of predicables, namely, genus, species, and specific difference.<sup>3a</sup>

(b) *Real* predicaments are the finite natures which exist, or are able to exist.

**Division.** "The division of 'being' into ten predicaments," comments St. Thomas, "is clearly not a univocal division of genus into species, but a division according to diverse modes of being (that is, according to a different relation to the 'to be'). The modes of being, however, if they manifest reality, must be proportionate to the manner of predication. For in predicating something of another,

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<sup>2</sup> These subjects are called the subjective parts, *partes subiectivae*. They are the various elements which compose a genus or a species.

<sup>3</sup> Not all philosophers admit ten predicaments. The Pythagoreans enumerate twenty, the Stoics four, the Epicureans ten, the Platonists five, etc. Note well that the Kantian categories are not to be refuted by comparing them with the Aristotelian categories. The Kantian categories are not concerned with the world of realities but with the "to be" of a proposition. Aristotle explains his own doctrine in the fourth chapter of the Book of Categories.

<sup>3a</sup> Cf. Boyer, Vol. I, p. 86, No. 2; Mauri, *op. cit.*, p. 174 sq.

we affirm that it is *that*,<sup>4</sup> consequently, the ten supreme genera of beings are called the ten predicaments."<sup>5</sup>

Let us now, with St. Thomas, see how we may derive these ten predicaments from an analysis of predication.<sup>6</sup>

There are three divisions into which we can make all predication fit. First of all, we can consider a predicate in so far as it is of its essence to be "not in another," but to be the subject itself. This is the predicament of *substance*. When I say, for instance, Socrates is man, the "to be" of man and the "to be" of Socrates, are identical. The "to be" of man is not in Socrates, but is the "to be" of Socrates.

Secondly, we find that the predicate is not the subject, but is *in* the subject. Its essence is to inhere in another, its "to be" is "to be in." Under this division, as we shall see, the predication is either absolute or not absolute; that is to say, either without reference to another being, or with reference to another. If predication is absolute (since we are dealing primarily with corporeal substances), we may consider such a predicate as necessarily flowing (*consequens*) either from the matter or from the form. If it flows simply from the matter (*ex parte materiae*), it is called the predicament of *quantity*. If it flows from the form, it is called the predicament of *quality*. When, however, predication is not had absolutely, but because of a necessary reference to another being, then we have the predicament which Aristotle calls "to another" (*ad aliquid*) or the predicament of *relation*. For instance, when we say that this man is a father, we do not predicate father of the subject absolutely, because the very concept "father" signifies a relation (*respectus*) which is in this man with respect to somebody outside him, namely, his son.

<sup>4</sup> To deny that the means of predication, that is, the judgment, is our supreme criterion of truth is to deny all knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> "*Sciendum est quod ens dividitur in decem predicamenta non univoce, sicut genus in species, sed secundum diversum modum essendi. Modi autem essendi proportionales sunt modis predicandi. Praedicando enim aliquid de aliquo altero, dicimus hoc esse illud: unde et decem genera entis dicuntur decem predicamenta.*" (*In III Phys.*, lect. 5.)

<sup>6</sup> The following paragraph is a paraphrase of the famous passages in *III Phys.*, lect. 5, and in *V Met.*, lect. 9, Nos. 891 and 892.

Thirdly, we find that sometimes the denomination of the predicate is had not by reason of its inherence in the subject, but by reason of something outside the subject. True, it is in the subject inasmuch as it inheres in it, but its sufficient reason for being what it is cannot be explained except by another being extrinsic to the subject. Note well that St. Thomas does not say that these supreme genera of reality are *mere* extrinsic denominations resulting in no real modification of the subject; nothing could be farther from his thoughts. He is discussing the real order, not the order of beings of reason. He simply says that although denominated by something extrinsic to the subject, these predicaments are really found in the subject.<sup>7</sup> One of them, it is true, as we shall see, is found in the subject "man" alone.

Now what are these predicates that are denominated by something extrinsic? To answer this question, we must observe that this extrinsic denomination can be had in two ways. The first is had when the denomination is by reason of something partially outside the subject, as efficient cause or agent. Inasmuch as this denomination is by an agent, we have the predicament *passion*; for to suffer, to be acted upon (*pati*), is nothing else than to receive something from the agent. On the other hand, the agent itself may be denominated by the effect; and by the reason of this denomination we have the predicament called *action*; for "action" is simply the act by the agent into another.

The second way is had when the denomination is by reason of something wholly outside the subject. This may be either as a measure of the subject, or may merely be adjacent to the subject. With regard to denomination by measure, we may note that measure can be altogether extrinsic, or may sometimes be considered as something intrinsic. Intrinsic measure has already been dealt with, for it indicates the three dimensions of a body, and hence pertains to quantity. Our concern now is with extrinsic measure. Extrinsic

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Boyer, *op. cit.*, I, p. 399.

measure can be had from *time* and *place*. According as something is denominated by *time*, it is called the predicament *when*. According as something is denominated by *place*, it is called the predicament *where* (*ubi*). In this latter denomination, of course, the position of the different parts is not considered. If the order of parts in place is considered, we have the predicament *site* (*situs*). A similar subdivision does not occur in the measure of time, because *time* indicates the order of parts and is defined as a successive number of motion.

### The Three Ways of Predicating Being of a Subject

1. In so far as it is a subject . . . . . *substance*  
(its mode of being is to be not in another)
2. In so far as it must  
inhere in another  
its mode of being  
is to be in another,  
but it is denomi-  
nated from some-  
thing within the  
subject . . . . .
 

{	absolutely	{	from the part of (as flowing from) matter . . . . . <i>quantity</i>
	from the part of (as flowing from) form . . . . . <i>quality</i>		
	not absolutely [it indicates order (with respect) to another] . . . . . <i>relation</i>		
3. It must also inhere  
in another, but its  
denomination is by  
reason of some-  
thing outside the  
subject
 

{	this extrinsic something is wholly outside the subject	{	as a	{	if the denomination is by the agent . . . <i>passion</i>
			measure of the subject		if the denomination is by the effect . . . <i>action</i>
				according to time . . . . . <i>when</i>	
			accord- ing to place	if the order of parts is not con- sidered <i>where</i> if the order of parts is con- sidered . . . <i>site</i>	
			as something merely adjacent <i>habit</i>		



Finally, the denomination by something merely adjacent to the subject is, as we have mentioned, peculiar to man. In other animals nature abundantly and sufficiently provides those things that are necessary for the conservation of life. Man on the contrary must do his own providing. He must clothe himself, wear shoes, etc. When a man, therefore, is said to be clothed, this new determination, which is something in the individual although denominated wholly from without, is the predicament called *habit*.

Hence there are three ways of predicating being of a subject as shown in the diagram on page 197.

We shall divide our treatise on the predicaments into five chapters. In the first we shall investigate the notion of substance. The second chapter will be devoted to a study of the corporeal individual substance. The third will deal with "supposit" and person. In the fourth we shall consider accidents in general, and in the fifth relations.

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT IS SUBSTANCE?

"God alone is pure act. Therefore only the substance of God is its 'to be' and its 'to act.'"<sup>8</sup>

**The Problem of Substance.** To explain action, or becoming in the order of activity, we studied in our first treatise, page 73, the necessary composition of act and potency, or substance and accident in limited being. We argued, it will be recalled, that because a finite being is not its "to be" it cannot be its "to act." The composite structure of substance and accident is a necessary deduction from the composition of act and potency in the order of existence, and, with regard to corporeal action, in the order of essences. Consequently in God the substance must be termed its "to act" and its "to be"; for God is pure act. It is evident, then, that substance like any other predicate will be affirmed of God and creatures only in an analogous manner. Now substance is supposedly one of the supreme genera of beings. As such, like every concept indicating the perfection of genus, it should be predicable of its inferiors in a univocal sense. Consequently, in order to understand how it is that our concept of substance is univocal when predicated of diverse creatures, yet analogous when said of God and of creatures, our first problem is to discover what substance really is. Let it not be thought that we are indulging in mere logical hair splitting. Our search to ascertain the true nature of substance by a metaphysical

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<sup>8</sup> "*Solus autem Deus est actus purus. Unde in solo Deo sua substantia est suum esse et suum agere.*" (*S. Th.*, I, 54, 1.)

analysis is a most important one; for should we fail in this, we would have to admit that the most fundamental concept of reality after that of "being" is not true of God, or at least, that we are not able to know anything about God except that He *IS*.

**Is God Substance?** Still, to be sure, if He *IS*, then He must be substance. For substance somehow indicates one that subsists (*subsistere*); and God, as we have seen, is the "subsisting to be." But how, then, will this concept be modified to allow predication of creatures? The word substance (*substare*) seems also to designate one that stands under—a prop or a support for accidents. The term *substance*, therefore, presents us with two distinct ideas: to subsist and to support. Now, while the first must most certainly be said of God, it would obviously be a very great error to add that His substance is a prop for accidents. Hence, we must conclude that the idea of substance as a support can be applied only to created substances.<sup>9</sup>

**Definition.** Let us, therefore, direct our attention to the idea of "to subsist." Can this idea be predicated both of God and of creatures? Certainly it will have to be modified to allow such predication. Perhaps, then, by an analysis of its meaning we can discover an essential reason for such a modification. "It is of the very nature of substance," explains St. Thomas, "that it subsists, as it were, a 'being *per se*.'"<sup>10</sup> But again such a definition "being *per se*" could not be applied to all substances, as if "being" were a genus and the *per se* the specific difference: for this would make substance a univocal concept when predicated of God and creatures. Therefore St. Thomas says: "Inasmuch as 'being' is not a genus, the very act of 'to be' cannot be the essence of substance or accident. Therefore this is not a definition of substance, 'being *per se*' without a subject;

<sup>9</sup> "*Tamen non eadem ratione dicitur subsistere et substare; sed subsistere in quantum non est in alio, substare vero in quantum alia insunt ei. Unde si aliqua substantia esset quae per se existeret, non tamen esset alicuius accidentis subiectum, posset proprie dici subsistentia, sed non substantia.*" (*De Pot.*, IX, 1, ad 4m.)

<sup>10</sup> "*De ratione substantiae est quod subsistit, quasi per se ens.*" (*In II Sent.*, d. 3,

but the function of the quiddity or essence of substance is to have a 'to be' not in a subject."<sup>11</sup> Wherefore we shall define substance as that "*to whose quiddity (essence, nature) is due a 'to be' not in another.*" The last words "not in another" indicate that the "to be" of a substance has no exigency, no relation (*habitus*) to inhere in another.

**Analogous and Univocal Predication of Substance.** It will be seen at once that since the formal aspect of this definition has nothing to do with the structure of the essence, but is founded on this alone that the "to be" is not ordered to exist in another, the reason for an analogy in the concept as it is predicated of God and of creature will be that the "to be" of God is identified with His essence, whereas in every creature a real distinction must be affirmed between its essence and "to be." Consequently the concept of substance, although analogous when predicated of God and creatures is found to be univocal—the supreme genus—when said of various creatures. "The word *substance* (as the supreme genus)," writes St. Thomas, "signifies not only what exists of itself—for 'to be' cannot of itself be a genus—but, it also signifies an essence that has the property of existing in this way—namely, of existing of itself. This '*to be*,' however (in created substance), *is not its essence.*"<sup>12</sup> Thus it is clear that God is not in the genus of substance.<sup>13</sup> Thus it should also be clear that it is not the essence of substance to *substare*, to sustain accidents. God's substance, as we have pointed out, is pure act, and hence cannot admit of accidents. But in creatures, as we saw in the tract on act and potency, their

<sup>11</sup> "*Quum ens non sit genus, hoc ipsum quod est esse non potest esse essentia substantiae vel accidentis. Non est ergo definitio substantiae, ens per se sine subiecto; sed quidditati seu essentiae substantiae competit habere esse non in subiecto.*" (S. Th., III, 77, 1, ad 2m.)

<sup>12</sup> "*Dicendum quod substantiae nomen non significat hoc solum 'quod est per se esse,' quia hoc quod est esse non potest per se esse genus; sed significat essentiam cui competit sic esse, quod tamen esse non est ipsa eius essentia.*" (S. Th., I, 3, 5, ad 1m.)

<sup>13</sup> Substance as predicable of God and creature is called non-predicamental to distinguish it from the univocal predicamental concept which is the supreme genus of creatures.

composite structure postulates the further composition of act and potency in the order of activity, so that created substance is necessarily the support of accidents. This is so, however, not because it is substance, but because it is *limited* substance.

**A Positive Concept.** Nor should we gather from the definition: "to whose essence is due a 'to be' not in another" that the concept of substance is merely a negative concept. The expression, it is true, is negative, but like all negations it supposes something positive. This "to be not in another" connotes a mode of being which is most perfect, a mode of being that is subsisting. True, the manner in which we get to know substance is by a negation, namely, by denying the order of the "to be" to another; but such a negation is an implicit affirmation of a perfection, of a positive reality. The perfection which is affirmed is precisely that of a "to be" that needs no subject of inhesion in order to exist.<sup>14</sup> "It is necessary," insists St. Thomas, "that account be taken of substance in this that substance is a thing (therefore something positive) whose function it is to inhere in no subject. And thus in the analysis of substance it is understood that it has a quiddity which does not demand a subject of inherence."<sup>15</sup>

**Erroneous Concept of Substance.** It is extremely important at this juncture to understand that substance is not a substratum, into which, so to speak, the accidents are stuck. Indeed, many of the difficulties brought against substance by the modern philosophers (Bergson, for example) have their origin in the misconception of substance as a dead, inert, unchangeable substratum into which the various accidents are pasted like paint on the wall. This these philosophers believe to be the scholastic view of substance, and they naturally reject it. Now nothing could be farther from the dynamism of the act and potency theory of the Angelic Doctor. It is true

<sup>14</sup> Cf. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus*, t. I, q. XV, a. 1, p. 446; *Vives*.

<sup>15</sup> "Oportet quod ratio substantiae intelligatur hoc modo, quod substantia sit res cui conveniat esse non in subiecto . . . et sic in ratione substantiae intelligatur quod habeat quidditatem, cui conveniat esse non in alio." (C.G., I, 25.)

such a doctrine was proposed by some of the later scholastics, and enjoyed a certain degree of popularity. To this sad fact must be attributed, at least in part, the collapse of scholasticism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For with the progress of experimental science, since these smaller entities which those philosophers called accidents, and the larger ones which they called the substances, could in no way be isolated in the laboratory, the entire doctrine of accidents as distinct from substance fell in disrepute, and the theories of Descartes, modified and made to fit the modern physical terminology, became the vogue.<sup>18</sup>

Only a lack of philosophic acumen can account for the advocacy of such a pernicious doctrine. The philosophers simply forgot the true object of philosophy. They transferred matter and form, substance and accidents, which are in the order of the principles of being, into the realm of physics or order of phenomena; and thought they could demonstrate the existence of these philosopho-physical monstrosities by chattering about them. The physical properties of bodies pertain to the order of experience, and a certain knowledge of them is the result of laborious experimentation in the laboratory. On the other hand some scientists did not show themselves much wiser. They imagined that science was philosophy, and, consequently, whatever they came in contact with in their laboratory work was declared to be an ultimate philosophic reality in the order of being. Now physical science, as we have already remarked and must frequently repeat, cannot reach the third degree of abstraction, and therefore cannot consider "being *qua* being." Its work—and marvelous work it is—deals with exterior phenomena. It makes little difference to a biologist as biologist what life is in itself; rather his concern is how a living material

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<sup>18</sup> Father De Raeymaecker profoundly remarks: "*Componentia experimentaliter quaeruntur in ordine physico, atque cum inveniri nequeant, ut phantasmatis figmenta legitime reiicienda videtur. Quod quidem moderna philosophia fecit. Substantiam iners substratum plane inutile decrevit; accidentia vero, phenomena intuitive percepta (sicut iam Nominalismus), unicam realitatem admisit.*" (*Meta-physics Generalis*, Vol. II, p. 342. Louvain: 1932, 1 ed.)

being behaves under various conditions. The physicist does not worry about the metaphysical implication of the necessity of composition in the realm of essence in order to explain the multiplication of corporeal beings within the same species; but, taking these different bodies as he finds them, he inquires merely into the phenomenal manifestations of their properties. It is unfortunate that there has been so much useless talk by excellent scientists on philosophical questions, and by well-intentioned philosophers who imagining, apparently, that they could prove the existence of the principles of being by the testimony of the senses, have foolishly endeavored to translate matter and form, substance and accident into terms of the laboratory.

**Substance, a Dynamic Reality.** Substance, therefore, is by no means a dead, inert substratum. It is the principle of being, and, as nature, the principle of action.<sup>17</sup> Although not essentially changed by these new determinations called accidents, it is nevertheless modified in a very real manner by them, so that while remaining the same substance it is made more or less perfect by the constant, successive, one might almost say, by the continuous becoming that is taking place.

Hence, our definition of substance is not, as certain recent writers have asserted, that which remains unchanged while accidents come and go, but it is, we repeat, that *whose quiddity is to be not in another*.

Our concept of substance, therefore, is the solution of our search for the absolute as a basis for the relative. It is the first being, *primum ens*, which the accidents suppose. Consequently by itself substance cannot be known by us immediately, except in so far as the relative manifests the absolute. "For," says Sertillanges,<sup>18</sup> "its qualities are not secondary beings glued on it like parasites; indeed the being of accidents is the being of substance, as it were, diffusing itself. And just as the accidents *are* by the substance, so the sub-

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Sertillanges, *op. cit.*, I, p. 76.

stance is manifested by them, and, consequently, made known by them." "The emanation of proper accidents from their subject is not by way of transmutation, but by a certain natural resultance."<sup>19</sup>

**Knowledge of Substance.** Our conclusion, therefore, is that substance and accident are not the object of experience, since they are principles of being, not beings, and consequently, cannot be known immediately. We can never know substance and accident as such by our senses. The research of all the laboratories in the world will not bring them nearer to us. Only the intellect, the supreme faculty of man, can by profound reflection ascertain their absolute, metaphysical necessity, and conclude to their existence. "Substance as such is not visible to the bodily eye, nor does it come under any one of the senses, nor under the imagination, but solely under the intellect, whose object is *what a thing is*."<sup>20</sup>

Since, however, all our knowledge begins with the senses, we should like to know the part played by the senses in the search after substance. Briefly it is this: the senses reach substance as such, and accidents as such not *per se*, but *per accidens*. That is, the impression received is not "this man," or "this whiteness," but a white something (*hoc album*), a something colored, a something extended, or rather (since the senses do not reach the something, that is, the substance) "the colored," "the extended." Consequently, the senses know nothing about being and its principles. *The intellect, however, sees the necessity for distinguishing between the determinations of the subject and the subject of these determinations, and, therefore, attains to the knowledge of substance and accidents as such.* We shall see that most of the difficulties of the Empiricists are due to their erroneous theory of knowledge. For, if we do away with the intellect as our supreme instrument for truth, and set up

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<sup>19</sup> "Emanatio propriorum accidentium a subiecto non est per aliquam transmutationem sed per naturalem resultationem." (S. Th., I, 77, 6, ad 3m.)

<sup>20</sup> "Substantia autem, in quantum huiusmodi, non est visibilis oculo corporali, neque subiacet alicui sensui, nec etiam imaginationi, sed soli intellectui, cuius obiectum est 'quod quid est.'" (S. Th., III, 76, 7.)



experience as our ultimate norm, then we must reject substance and accident which can be known only by the intellect.

**Need of a Correct Theory of Knowledge.** It is obvious, then, that an argument to prove the reality of substance would be of little value against those who deny or doubt the value of the intellect as an instrument for truth. Any real demonstration — if this be possible — must begin with a critical study of their theory of knowledge. We say "if this be possible," since an ultimate such as substance can hardly be demonstrated in a strict sense, precisely because it is evident.

**Can the Reality of Substance Be Demonstrated?** St. Thomas, who united great simplicity of expression to profound thought, does not attempt a formal proof. It is ridiculous, he says — and these are strong words for such a serene soul as that of the Angelic Doctor — it is ridiculous to try to prove that which is evident by that which is not. For the senses manifest to us the exterior determinations of substance. To deny nature or substance would be to deny a principle of motion. It would be to say that there is motion without a principle of motion. That indeed is ridiculous.<sup>21</sup>

## OPINIONS

The different doctrines on the question of substance proposed by various philosophers must in the last analysis be founded on their respective theories of knowledge. Their conclusions about substance will necessarily be drawn from such principles; for our knowledge

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<sup>21</sup> "*Ridiculum est quod aliquis tentet demonstrare quod natura sit, quum manifestum sit secundum sensum, quod multa sunt a natura quae habent principium sui motus in se. Velle autem demonstrare manifestum per non manifestum, est hominis qui non potest iudicare quid est notum propter se, et quid non est notum propter se; quia, dum vult demonstrare id quod est notum propter se, utitur eo quasi non propter se noto. . . . Naturam autem esse est per se notum, in quantum naturalia sunt manifesta sensui. Sed quid sit uniuscuiusque rei natura, vel quod principium motus, hoc non est manifestum . . . sed ignorantia principiorum moventium non impedit quin naturam esse sit per se notum.*" (In II Phys., lect. 1, No. 8.) With Thomas, then, substance, nature has the meaning of a law. It is the most necessary, the first thing to be said about anything that exists absolutely (*simpliciter*), and that manifests itself to the senses.

of the fundamental reality which we call substance depends on the nature of the instrument used. We shall endeavor, in regard to some of the more important philosophers at least, to show this necessary connection between their deductions on substance and their views on human cognition.

**Aristotle and Thomas.** It has been thought generally that substance according to St. Thomas—we are dealing primarily with corporeal substance—is a mere repetition of the lucubrations of Aristotle. It is true these two expositions of substance have much in common: the composition or composite, of matter and form; the distinction between substance and accident; the fact that our first concept is not of the individual, or first substance, but of the abstracted universal, second substance. There are, however, profound differences. Aristotle thought the necessary only to be intelligible, hence the individual substance depending as it does on matter, which according to the Philosopher is the eternal principle of evil and limitation is in no way the object of cognition. St. Thomas, on the contrary, constantly asserts that the individual, not the universal is the ultimate object of any intellect, even of man's: "It belongs to our cognition to know the singulars."<sup>22</sup> For the individual, the only actual reality in the existential order is in itself intelligible.<sup>23</sup>

According to St. Thomas, then, corporeal substance is a composite of matter and form, substance and accident. These components are not beings, but principles of being, and transcendently ordered to each other as potency to act, so that one component cannot exist without the other. *The unity of the being in the order of being is established by the unique "to be" in that order. In Aristotle, the question of unity in the existential order is never considered.*

The differences between Aristotelian and Thomistic substance may be reduced to the intelligibility of the individual and the unity

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<sup>22</sup> "Cognoscere singularia pertinet ad cognitionem nostram." (S. Th., I, 14, 11.)

<sup>23</sup> "La doctrine thomiste diffère de celle du stagyrite en ceci que l'être substantiel grâce à la notion de la création est intelligible pour St. Thomas." (Jolivet, *La notion de substance*, p. 36, Paris: Beauchesne, 1929.)

of the same in the existential order.<sup>24</sup> Hence, two important points which are not found in Aristotle are really essential in St. Thomas' theory of substance: the real distinction, and the intelligibility of the individual.<sup>25</sup>

**Duns Scotus.** St. Thomas, we saw, does not admit the intuition of the individual, at least in the ordinary mode of cognition of man. For Duns Scotus, on the contrary, the individual is immediately apprehended by the intellect. This principle, however, makes for exaggerated realism. Matter and form are conceived not as principles of being united transcendently and actuated in the order of existence by a unique "to be," but as beings existing in their own rights. The same may be said of substance and accidents. The intimate unity of the composite of the Thomistic thesis has been greatly weakened, if not completely destroyed. The perfect unit is only a word, and the multiplication of forms must ultimately follow. As a result the stage is set for nominalism.<sup>26</sup>

**Nominalism** eventually appears with William of Occam. In one sense Occamism is a reaction against the exaggerated realism of Scotus. "A plurality of beings," he asserted, "is not to be posited without necessity."<sup>27</sup> By establishing his system of thought upon the Scotistic intuition of the individual, however, Occam was led to a denial of everything that is not the individual. For him there is, therefore, no such problem as individuation; there are no principles of being. Substance is either identified with accidents, or it is a mere idea. But prime matter is an existing being, and hence the individual will be a composite not of many principles but of

<sup>24</sup> Cf. De Raeymaeker, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

<sup>25</sup> Ultimately this intelligibility depends on the real distinction, namely the individual (which is in the order of existence, while the universal is only a concept) is intelligible because its essence signifies order (*habitus*) to the "to be," and consequently it can and does share in the divine *esse* which is Intelligibility itself.

<sup>26</sup> "*Pensée* (of Scotus), très élaborée . . . couvrant de son crédit une erreur initiale qui devait tôt ou tard provoquer l'apparition du nominalisme franc." (Maréchal, *op. cit.*, I, p. 82.)

<sup>27</sup> "*Numquam est ponenda pluralitas sine necessitate.*" (In II Sent., d. 27, q. 2K. Quoted by De Raeymaeker, p. 404.)

many beings. Finally (and in this Occam seems more logical than Scotus), since we have no other intuition except that of the singular, and this is had by a concept, no other knowledge is required, and, consequently, no other is had. Abstraction is a word; the universal a mere name. With the destruction of the universal as the source of certain scientific knowledge, Occam destroys all metaphysical certitude of principles and of natures, and prepares the way for the empiricism and skepticism of Hume.<sup>28</sup>

In Suarez we find a sincere effort to face the insoluble problem of union in a being composed of beings; for he, too, with his theory of knowledge based on the primacy of the particular concept, must deny the real distinction and the principles of being. His theory of the modes to solve the hopeless difficulty of a perfect unit resulting from the juxtaposition of two beings, matter and form, is one of the most fundamental points in his system. This we have already explained.

**Empiricists.** It is obvious that those philosophers who admit only sensible impressions can never concede the existence of a substance, the knowledge of whose essence transcends sensible cognition.

In the first place we find Descartes, who, although by no means an empiricist (indeed he would have been embarrassed to find himself mentioned with the empiricists, for he himself holds substance and defends a spiritual faculty of knowledge, namely, the intellect), nevertheless by his exaggerated dualism prepared the way for empiricism. For, if there be a complete division between matter and form, as between being and being; if, moreover, extension constitute corporeal substance,<sup>29</sup> and thought be thinking nature,<sup>30</sup> then sooner or later the natural deduction will be that the knowledge of the senses which is in the world of corporeal substance can never reach the "thinking thought." This would mean that our knowledge must be limited to sensible impressions.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Maréchal, *op. cit.*, I, 120 et sq.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Principes*, I part, c. 53.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem.*, 60-62.

Descartes, it is true, did not make this deduction, but it was made by those who came after him.

Being a mathematician, Descartes naturally reduced all material substance to extension (quantity). Moreover, if accidents are beings — and by this Descartes understood not principles of being, but something existing in its own right — and really distinct from substance, then he argued they should be able to exist separated from substance. To his mind separation, or at least separability, is the only criterion for a real distinction. In consequence, he concludes that there are no accidents really distinct from their substance.<sup>31</sup> Hence his definition of substance: "A thing which exists in such a manner as to require no other thing for its existence."<sup>32</sup> This is an ambiguous definition, to say the least, which in a strict sense, as Descartes himself readily admits, could be said only of God.<sup>33</sup>

This definition of substance was accepted later and improved upon by Spinoza (1632-1677). "Substance," he said, "is that which is in itself and is conceived by itself; in other words, it is that whose concept does not need the concept of anything else from which it should be formed."<sup>34</sup>

In the treatise on causes we have already sufficiently explained the theory of knowledge of Locke. Here it is enough to recall that in spite of his erroneous principles (they amount to a practical denial of the intellect) which should lead him to reject substance, Locke admits that substance is a reality. The Lockian substance, however, is not at all what Thomas understands by it, for it is only an unknown substratum, a mere support for the sensible qualities. "If any one will examine himself concerning his notion of pure

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Meditationes*, 6 Resp.; ed. Tannery, t. 7, p. 434.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Principes*, I part, c. 51.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ethic.*, p. 1, def. 3a. It is interesting to note how the definition of Spinoza indicates the necessity of the real distinction in the definition of a created or limited substance. For if the concept of such a substance is not its "to be," then it manifests its dependence upon an extrinsic efficient cause. "From the fact that a being is by participation, it follows that it is caused." (*S. Th.*, I, 44, 1. ad 1m.)

substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what *support* of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents."<sup>35</sup> It follows if we are to get an idea of a definite substance, e.g., horse, stone, this will be a "collection of those several simple ideas of sensible qualities which we used to find united in the thing called horse or stone."<sup>36</sup> In other words, our idea of this substance, or rather we should call it our sensible impression, is a unification in the sense faculty of "colored," "extended," "hard," "round," etc. Our intellectual knowledge has been reduced to sensible impressions.

Hume goes farther than Locke and simply denies the objectivity of substance. We do not find much difficulty in granting his denial, since what he denies is not at all "that whose quiddity is to be not in another," but the same dead substratum of Locke, a sort of nucleus covered over by what we see and touch. Nothing, as we have seen, could be further from the true concept of substance. "We have," says Hume, "no idea of substance, distinct from that of a collection of particular qualities, nor have we any other meaning when we either talk or reason concerning it."<sup>37</sup> It seems to us, on the contrary, that by the notion of substance we have been discussing and meaning something that is not at all like that. But let us listen to Hume's explanation. "Thus our idea of gold may be at first a yellow color, weight, malleableness, fusibility. . . . The idea of substance is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned them, by which we are able to recall . . . that collection."<sup>38</sup> Let us put this difficulty in more exact language. If we were to consider separately the different qualities of a corporeal being, for

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<sup>35</sup> Locke, *op. cit.*, p. 391. So great has the influence of Locke been, that we find something very close to his idea of substance proposed by some recent scholastic writers as the correct notion (concept) of substance.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 395.

<sup>37</sup> Hume, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

instance its color, its extension, its weight, we should sooner or later come to a point when nothing else would remain. Consequently, there is nothing beyond the different qualities of bodies, and substance is a mere figment of the brain. The answer is obvious. What I cognize with my senses is not the color, but "the colored," not the extension but "the extended." Now "the colored," "the extended" include the manifestations not merely of the accident, but also of the substance. True, I cannot attain the accident as such or the substance as such with my senses, but the impression received supposes, includes, and postulates both; and, therefore, both are "taken in" and known *per accidens* by the senses. Consequently, we should have no difficulty in granting that if we were to separate what is manifested by the sense cognition, nothing should remain. In fact, we might go Hume one better and state that nothing would remain after the first separation. Hume's difficulty, of course, arises from two false conceptions. The first has to do with the structure of being—namely, that substance (if there be such a thing) and accidents are beings, even sensible beings, and that consequently they can be reached directly by the senses. The second is the false notion that sense perception means the knowledge of the essence of things. Now, we repeat, it is altogether beyond the sense faculty to know being as such. The sense faculty receives the impression of an external manifestation (phenomena) caused by the whole being, and not merely by a quality. A quality as such can only be known by the intellect.

**Kant.** We now come to the German philosopher Kant. His theory of substance is the necessary outcome of his subjectivist theory of knowledge. We note, in the first place, an empirical foundation and the influence of Hume in the limitation of his knowledge of the outside world to sensitive cognition—the knowledge of phenomena. Wanting, however, to react against what he considered excessive in this doctrine, Kant affirms the necessity of a certain unity to be established. This unity is purely subjective, and so is the aprioristic form according to which the multiplicity of phe-

nomena is to be organized into the substance. Accordingly, there is no real certitude to be had in the affirmation of substance.

The same must be said of the thinking subject, the "*Ego*," absolute and noumenal.

That I, who think, can be considered in thinking as *subject* only, and as something not simply inherent in the thinking, as predicate, in an apodictical and even identical proposition; but it does not mean that, as an object, I am a *self-dependent* being or *substance*. The latter would be saying a great deal, and requires for its support data which are not found in the thinking. . . . Hence it follows that . . . reason imposes upon us an *apparent knowledge* only, by representing the constant logical subject of thought as the knowledge of the real subject in which that knowledge inheres. Of that subject, however, we have not and cannot have the slightest knowledge, because consciousness is that which alone changes representations into thoughts, and in which therefore, as the transcendental subject, all our perceptions must be found.<sup>39</sup>

This argument shows clearly the Kantian impossibility of admitting with certitude the objectivity of substance. The reason for this impossibility is a logical conclusion from the subjectivism of his theory of knowledge. The correspondence of the thought with reality can never be ascertained, and, consequently, we never know whether our thought is true. This must be said even of the consciousness which the thinking subject has of himself, of his own substance.

The Kantian refutation of substance agrees perfectly with Thomas' assertion that we cannot demonstrate in a strict sense the objectivity of substance. It is absurd, he says, even to try "*Ridiculum est. . .*"<sup>40</sup> And this explains the phenomenal success of Kantian philosophy. Because he begins by trying to prove that which is manifest, namely, the objectivity of knowledge, he succeeds in proving that we cannot prove it and concludes erroneously

<sup>39</sup> Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason," *Transcendental Dialectic*, Book II, ch. 1. (Translated by Max Müller, Macmillan.)

<sup>40</sup> II, *Phys.*, lect. 1, No. 8. This was quoted, p. 206.



that perhaps there is no such thing. From this initial and fundamental error, he is able to proceed with great logical force to a series of erroneous conclusions such as he asserts in the question of substance. The refutation of the Kantian system, as Mr. Gilson has so well explained,<sup>41</sup> should not be a criticism of each error separately considered, nor even an effort at trying to prove positively that the intellect of man does attain truth, for that is evident and cannot be proved positively. Rather, it should be quite sufficient to indicate historically how this doctrine has led to a bankruptcy of the human mind, a bankruptcy exemplified by all his followers, especially by the ravings of the idealists, and culminating in the cosmic catastrophe of the Nazi state.

**Bergson.** Finally, we should give some attention to Bergson's intuition of substance. It is a profound criticism of the psychological atomism (stream of thought theory) of the empiricist and pragmatist which explains substance as the psychological unity of successive phenomena. Bergson strenuously objects to the dissecting of accidents as if they were small parts to be fitted in a puzzle, and held in place by a substance which is an inert and senseless form. For him the continuous changes which take place in the individual are not to be considered as distinct from each other and from the substance. This is the one great reality, the "becoming." True, he states, the senses and intellect establish distinct entities, cutting as it were slices of reality, but this must be rectified by a pure intuition of the real: "making a clear sweep the philosopher will see the material world melt back into a simple flux, a continuity of flowing, a becoming."<sup>42</sup> Nothing is static, reality is dynamic, it is always becoming. This is true in a special manner of the "*Ego*," which is pictured by the intellect as the stable substratum of mobility, or change, as if to unite the diverse psychological "states." But the error is to have separated them as if static. They are continuous.

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. "Le Réalisme méthodique," in *Philosophia perennis*, t. II, p. 745 et seq.

<sup>42</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 390; translated by Mitchel (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1911).

In this did the psychological atomists err, for *duration* is continuous.<sup>43</sup>

Although the thoroughness of Bergson's criticism of psychological atomism is to be admired, his doctrine is too dependent upon merely empiric data, and consequently fails to ascend to the true and complete concept of substance. The element of truth in his dynamistic theories has already been noted, and is in accord with the act and potency of Thomistic doctrine.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2 et sq.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION IN CORPOREAL SUBSTANCES

**The Problem.** Having ascertained the definition of substance together with its reality, we may now proceed to the problem of individual corporeal substances. The problem may be stated in this fashion: Why is *this* individual *this* individual and not another? Why is Peter Peter and not Paul? It is obvious that Peter and Paul do not differ in so far as they are man, for if the nature of man were the ultimate reason for their differing one from the other we should have to conclude either that one or the other is not man or that they are identical. Both conclusions are obviously erroneous. Certainly both are men; certainly, too, their specific nature, *man*, is the reason for their similarity, not for their difference. As St. Thomas expresses it, if *this man* is *this man* because he is *man*, then *all men* would be *this man*, and, consequently, only one man could exist. Since this is not so, the reason for the "*this*" must be something else besides the specific nature. What is it? The answer will be the solution of the problem of individuation.

Now this problem, in its fundamental aspect, is evidently the same as the one we faced in the treatise on act and potency, under the title of the limitation of act and its multiplication in the order of essence.<sup>1</sup> In a sense, then, our problem is already solved. Potency it is which is the reason for limitation, multiplication, and indi-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 62.

viduation, at least in a negative manner,<sup>2</sup> and, in this case, the potency in question is matter. It is to matter, then, we must look for the reason why *this* man is *this* man. Matter is the principle of individuation. Of this we can be sure; and that is why, as we noted then, the problem of individuation is sometimes treated immediately after the question of the multiplication of individuals in the same essence. In fact, it is a mere corollary to that thesis. Because, however, of the difficulty of the question, the subtlety of the analysis which must be made, and the knowledge of substance and intrinsic causality required for a thorough understanding of the complete solution, we have thought it best to place the study of this problem in the present tract.

**Erroneous and Insufficient Solutions.** Note carefully that we are seeking the *ultimate* reasons for individuation. It would not do, therefore, to say that Peter is Peter and different from Paul because of the color of his hair, because of his height or weight, because he dresses better than Paul, or because he lives in a different town. These are only external signs manifesting his individuality. We are not seeking the external manifestations of individuality, but the ultimate and most profound principle of it.

It will not suffice to say: Of course the reason why they are different is because God made them different. That is true; but to say that is to state only the extrinsic cause for their actuation in the existential order. God is the agent. But that is not what we are looking for. Our question is: what is it in the individual that makes it *this* individual? What is it *in* Peter that makes him different from anybody else?

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<sup>2</sup> "Two things pertain to the nature of an individual (a corporeal being); first that it is being in act whether in itself or in another; second, that it be divided from others, which are or can be in the same species while it is undivided in itself." "*De ratione individui (corporei) duo sunt, scilicet, quod sit ens actu vel in se vel in alio, et quod sit divisum ab aliis, quae sunt vel possunt esse in eadem specie, in se indivisum.*" (*In IV Sent.*, dist. 12, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3m.) Our problem is not that the individual is a "being in act," but that it is not identical with other individuals of the same species. That clearly is the negative aspect of individuation.

Again one might say, this is an extremely simple question. Peter is Peter and consequently not Paul nor John, because he has this particular soul, this particular body, namely, Peter's body and soul. In other words Peter is Peter because his whole being is his own being; it is what it is. This is a beautifully simple answer, and true, too, no doubt; but alas, it says nothing new, it explains nothing. Of course Peter is Peter because his soul is Peter's and his body his own and not someone else's. Who ever doubted it? But really that does not help one bit, because what we want to know is precisely why is it that Peter has that particular body and soul, and nothing else will satisfy our curiosity except that.

**The True Solution.** Because of the profundity and the obscurity of the problem, we shall find many different answers to the question of individuation. But before proposing the various opinions we should like to submit the clear and beautiful doctrine of St. Thomas.

In the *De Ente et Essentia*<sup>3</sup> he explains that matter is the principle of individuation, not, however, prime matter as such, but "signate matter" with its parts outside of parts (extension), with its order of parts (*situs*), and *considered* under its "determinate" dimensions. This doctrine has been taught by the entire Thomistic school. There is, however, a difference of opinion between the two great commentators of St. Thomas. While Ferrara,<sup>4</sup> the commentator of the *Contra Gentiles*, asserts that this "signate matter" under its dimensions is to be understood as the matter actuated and existing with its quantity, under its actual dimensions, the great Cajetan,<sup>5</sup> as well as John of St. Thomas,<sup>6</sup> and many others insist that the matter in question is only in potency (not yet actuated) to this quantity rather than to that, so that it is capable (*capax*) of this

<sup>3</sup> "Et ideo sciendum est quod materia non quolibet modo accepta est individuationis principium, sed solum materia signata. Et dico materiam signatam, quae sub determinatis dimensionibus consideratur." (*De Ente et Essentia*, c. 2.)

<sup>4</sup> In I *Contra Gentiles*, c. 21.

<sup>5</sup> In *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 2, q. 5; in I S. Th., q. 29, a. 1, X, edit. Leonina.

<sup>6</sup> *Cursus Philosophicus*, Philosophia naturae, Part II, q. 9, Nos. 3, 4.

and not of that extension. That, they say, is sufficient for matter to individuate the form.

It seems to us more according to the truth and to the texts of St. Thomas to accept the opinion of Ferrara. For it is not clearly seen why prime matter would have a definite order to this rather than to that quantity. On the contrary, matter that is in act and extended by reason of its quantity (as a condition, not as a cause) will be found to be this matter rather than that. For quantity is the only accident which because of its *actual situs* (order of parts) individuates itself not as *of* this individual, but as *this* quantity (*non huius sed haec*). Matter, then, because of its extension, becomes *this* matter and is able in limiting the form to individuate it.

**Difficulty.** There is, however, in Ferrara's doctrine a formidable difficulty which may seem well nigh insurmountable. Fortunately, this difficulty is due to our imagination and can be dissipated by serious reflection. The difficulty is this: if matter is the principle of individuation, that is, if it makes the form become *this* form, then it must first be *this* matter. But in order to be *this* matter, as we explained in presenting the doctrine of Ferrara, it must not only be in act, but it must be "quanta" or "signate matter" as we call it, with its actual dimensions before the coming of the form. This would seem to mean that matter must first exist alone without the form. For if matter needed the form for its actuation, that is, for its "to be," and for all the other perfections, both essential and accidental, such as quantity, which must follow, then the form would have to be an individual first, since whatever exists is necessarily an individual. In either case, matter existing first and individuating the form, or form existing first and individuating matter, we have a denial of the fundamental principle of the limitation of act by potency and of the actuation of potency by act.

**Solution.** Now this difficulty is really no difficulty at all. It is, as we have mentioned, merely due to our imagination which portrays all causality in terms of efficiency; for it is only of the efficient cause that we can indirectly have a sensible experience. Of the

other causes, especially the intrinsic, the imagination knows nothing. Now it is true we generally experience some priority of time in the agent, *not*, however, *as agent* (since it is impossible for the cause to be actually causing without the effect taking place), but in the agent as a being in the existential order. Applying this experience to the order of intrinsic causality, we demand that matter, "signate matter," which we say is the principle of individuation, exist somehow before the coming of the form in order to be able to individuate it. Else, we say, the form should be the principle of individuation, and exist first as an individual. Our conjecture, however, is wrong on both counts! We forget that matter and form are in the order of *intrinsic causality*, and therefore that there can be no question of priority of time as with beings in the existential order. Matter and form are not beings, remember, but principles of being. We forget, moreover, that their causality is not had by action, but by a mere communication of their own reality, and that the causality exercised is mutual and simultaneous. Just as the form gives the "to be" and the specific perfection (with the proper accidents emanating from such a perfection), so the matter *at the same time* limits and individuates. And, consequently, to say that the matter must first exist in time and be *quanta* (signate matter)<sup>7</sup> in order to individuate the form, or to say that the form must exist first in order to actuate the matter is pure nonsense and in truth a denial of the very nature of intrinsic causality. It is the form which gives matter "to be," actuates it, and by union with it makes the matter be a body; it is the matter which limits and individuates the form. The causality of these two principles of being is *mutual* and *simultaneous*. True, we cannot imagine such a thing, for such causality transcends all sense experience; with our intellect, however, we can understand clearly why this must be.

**Order of the Perfections Received.** In the mutual causality, then, there is no actual sequence in the order of time. Since they are

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. explanation, page 64.

principles of being, the matter does not exist without the form nor the form without the matter. Their union down to the ultimate perfection and properties of the essence is instantaneous. Still, as St. Thomas says, we can with the mind consider (*praeintelligitur*) a certain order. In the first place, we may consider the form giving the "to be" together with the actuation of the fundamental specific perfection. Consequently, just as we consider the same substantial form giving the ulterior perfections according to the regular sequence (not in time) of the different grades of specific acts, so must the proper accidents follow each specific perfection. Consequently, quantity will follow corporeity. Now once the matter is *quanta* with its dimensions, it is individuated, for quantity having parts outside of parts individuates itself. The matter then being *quanta* and consequently being *this* matter individuates the form. And now the form gives its ulterior perfections.

This difficult point is clearly explained by Father Charles Boyer in the following terms: "It is true that the substantial form is one, and that it gives simultaneously all substantial determinations, which consequently are not distinct. These determinations, however, or effects of the form have a definite order: animality, for example, supposes life, and this in turn requires corporeity. It is proper, therefore, for the mind to understand one effect before the others. Now if we consider only the effect of corporeity, which is first, and from which flows quantity, it is clear that by this effect matter receives *interminate dimensions* by means of which it individuates the form. This is the solution of St. Thomas."<sup>8</sup>

This sequence, then, is perceived by the mind because of the logical order of generic and specific perfections; but, let us repeat, this order or sequence is in no wise temporal, since the causality is intrinsic and mutual.

This profound and satisfying doctrine is aptly expressed by St. Thomas in the following texts.

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<sup>8</sup> Boyer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 487.



The more perfect form virtually contains whatever belongs to the inferior forms; therefore, while remaining one and the same, it perfects matter according to the various degrees of perfection. For the same essential form makes man an actual being, a body, a living being, an animal, and a man. Now it is clear that every genus is followed by its own proper accidents. Therefore, as matter is *first apprehended* as perfected in its existence, *before* it is *understood* as corporeal, and so of the other [generic perfections]; so those accidents which belong to being are *understood first* to exist before corporeity; and thus dispositions are *understood first* in matter before the form, not as regards all its effects, but as regards the subsequent effect.<sup>9</sup>

Dimensions of quantity are accidents consequent to the corporeity which belong to the whole matter. Wherefore matter, once *understood* as corporeal and measurable, can be *understood* as distinct in its various parts, and as receptive of different forms according to the further degrees of perfection. For although it is essentially the same form which gives matter the various degrees of perfection, as we have said, yet it is considered as different when brought under the observation of reason.<sup>10</sup>

**Interminate Dimensions.** What are these dimensions spoken of in the last quotation? The question of dimensions has caused a great deal of confusion in the minds of those who did not understand the terminology of St. Thomas. To understand the signifi-

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<sup>9</sup> "Forma perfectior virtute continet quidquid est inferiorum formarum; et ideo una et eadem existens perficit materiam secundum diversos perfectionis gradus. Una enim et eadem forma est per essentiam, per quam homo est ens actu, et per quam est corpus, et per quam est vivum, et per quam est animal, et per quam est homo. Manifestum est autem quod unumquodque genus consequuntur propria accidentia. Sicut ergo materia praeintelligitur perfecta secundum esse ante intellectum corporeitatis, et sic de aliis: ita praeintelliguntur accidentia quae sunt propria entis ante corporeitatem; et sic praeintelliguntur dispositiones in materia ante formam non quantum ad omnem eius effectum, sed quantum ad posteriorem." (S. Th., I, 76, 6, ad 1m.)

<sup>10</sup> "Dimensiones quantitativae sunt accidentia consequentia corporeitatem, quae toti materiae convenit. Unde materia iam intellecta sub corporeitate et dimensionibus, potest intelligi ut distincta in diversas partes; ut sic accipiat diversas formas secundum ultiores perfectionis gradus. Quamvis enim eadem forma sit secundum essentiam, quae diversos perfectionis gradus materiae attribuit, ut dictum est, tamen secundum considerationem rationis differt." (Loc. cit., ad 2m.)

cance of Thomas' words we must distinguish clearly between *terminate*, *interminate*, and *determinate* dimensions.

The expression *determinate* signifies that the dimensions are definitely *these*, that is, distinct from any other. Thus Paul's dimensions are determinate since they are his, not Peter's. *Terminate* is used to indicate the ultimate dimensions of a body. Thus the terminate dimensions of Paul are that he is six feet tall, that he has a red face, a square head, flat feet, weighs two hundred pounds, etc. On the contrary, when we speak of *interminate* dimensions, we do not consider what the ultimate or terminate dimensions may be, but only that this object is in *three dimensions*, that it has parts outside parts. Of course there are terminations to these dimensions, but they are not considered. In other words, whether this individual is six feet or less, whether his eyes are brown or blue is not taken into account. Now St. Thomas says that the dimensions which are necessary for individuation are the *interminate*. He does not deny that these dimensions have their terminations; he simply points out that these terminations make no difference in the question of individuation.

It is clear from this that the term "determinate" may be said indifferently of dimensions that are terminate or interminate. And this St. Thomas does. At times as in the *De Ente et Essentia* he uses the word determinate dimensions, to indicate the fact that they are *these* in contradistinction to any others. At other times, as in the commentary of the *De Trinitate* of Boethius, he indicates the dimensions required for individuation are the interminate and not the terminate. A careful reading of the text will do away with any ambiguity.

Since matter, considered in itself, is indistinct [without division], it is impossible that it should individuate the form received in itself, except in so far as it is divisible [distinguishable]. For the form is not individuated for the reason that it is received in matter, but only in so far as it is received in *this* matter or *that* matter, distinct and determined for the here and the now. Matter is not divisible unless

it has quantity; wherefore the Philosopher in the First Book of the Physics says that, if quantity is removed, matter remains an indivisible substance. And so matter is made this and signate in so far as it has dimensions [terms]. Now these dimensions [terms] can be considered in two ways. On the one hand, they can be considered according to a definite size and shape: and thus, as perfect beings, they are placed in the genus of quantity: thus they cannot be the principle of individuation, because such a termination varies in the individual, and it would follow that the individual would not always remain exactly the same. On the other hand, the dimensions [terms] can be considered interminate only [without determination] in the nature of dimension, although they can never be interminate [without termination], just as the nature of color cannot be without the determination of white or black; and thus they are placed in the genus of quantity, but only as imperfect. From these interminate dimensions is brought about *this* matter, signate matter; and thus it individuates the form. Thus through the matter is caused a numerical diversity in the same species.<sup>11</sup>

## OPINIONS

It is a foregone conclusion that those philosophers who reject the act and potency theory cannot accept matter as the principle of limitation and individuation. Indeed, as we indicated in our historical treatment on substance, not a few of them did not even

<sup>11</sup> "Cum materia in se considerata sit indistincta, non potest esse quod formam in se receptam individuat, nisi secundum quod est distinguibilis. Non enim forma individuat per hoc quod recipitur in materia, nisi quatenus recipitur in hac materia, vel illa, distincta et determinata ad hic et nunc. Materia autem non est divisibilis nisi per quantitatem: unde Philosophus dicit in I Phys. quod submota quantitate remanet substantia indivisibilis. Et ideo materia efficitur haec et signata, secundum quod est sub dimensionibus. Dimensiones autem istae possunt dupliciter considerari. Uno modo secundum earum terminationem; et dico eas terminari secundum terminatam mensuram et figuram: et sic, ut entia perfecta collocantur in genere quantitatis: et sic non possunt esse principium individuationis, quia cum talis dimensionum terminatio varietur frequenter circa individuum, sequeretur quod individuum non remaneret idem numero semper. Alio modo possunt considerari sine ista determinatione in natura dimensionis tantum, quamvis numquam sine determinatione esse possint, sicut nec natura coloris sine determinatione albi et nigri; et sic collocantur in genere quantitatis ut imperfectum. Et ex his dimensionibus interminatis efficitur haec materia signata; et sic individuat formam, et sic ex materia causatur diversitas secundum numerum in eadem specie." (In Boet. de Trinitate, IV, 2.)

consider individuation to be a problem. This is specially true of the Nominalists and Empiricists. For in their doctrine, since the concept of specific nature as such cannot be had, and since that which we know is the individual and nothing but the individual, the problem of individuation is not proposed, for there is no point in trying to find out that which we know.

Besides these, however, there are among the more important scholastic philosophers several theories which deserve our attention.

Having established his distinction between formalities (*distinctio formalis ex natura rei*) which holds the middle position between the real and the logical, and is therefore wholly unintelligible, Scotus proceeds to explain that in each individual, besides the common nature, man for example, there is something more. Scotus calls it by a barbarous word: *haecceitas*<sup>12</sup> from the Latin "haec" meaning "this." It is the "thisness" which according to Scotus must determine each being to be *this* individual. Now the "thisness" for each individual will have to differ; in Peter we shall call it "Petreity," in Paul, "Pauleity," and we shall say that Peter is not merely man, but is Peter because of his "Petreity," and, consequently, he is not Paul, since "Petreity" is not at all like "Pauleity." This, no doubt, is a very convenient way of treating the problem of individuation, but the truth is it really does not solve anything. In the first place, the fundamental distinction of Scotus is not acceptable, since a distinction that is more than logical (of the mind) and less than real is inconceivable. Moreover, the fact that a nature (man, for example) exists in the individual and is individuated precisely by the "thisness" from which it is distinct would lead one to conclude that the nature "man" in Peter is not an individual nature. What then could it be? The only alternative is a universal nature. But a universal nature actually existing as universal in different individuals is the supreme absurdity. Finally, we might inquire, what of the "thisness"? If it is something, then it should have to be individuated, for the reason that every nature, according to the doctrine of Scotus, needs to be

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Report*, II, dist. 12, q. 5, Nos. 1, 8, 13, 14.

individuated. Hence, we should need another "thisness" to individuate the first, a third for the second, and for the rest of our days we should be looking for an infinite series of smaller and smaller "thisnesses."

Suarez, also, since he does not admit the limitation of act by potency had, of necessity, to evolve his own theory of individuation. His views are closer to those of Occam who denies that there is such a problem, than to those of Scotus, who, with his usual subtlety, creates new little entities, the "thisnesses." With Suarez the very being, the very entity of the individual is the reason for his individuality.<sup>13</sup> We can only agree with the *Doctor Eximius*, adding, however, that we should like to go a bit further in our analysis of the individual, and to find the reason for the fact that the entity of the individual is *this* entity. For it seems to us that to say that an individual is this individual because of his entity, is merely to restate the problem of individuation.

Others like Godfrey de Fontaines (†1306), failing to understand the saying of the Philosopher: "It is the act which makes for distinction" (*actus est qui distinguit*), thought that the form is the act and, consequently, the form is the principle of individuation. Aristotle, of course, in that celebrated phrase meant to say that the form by giving the specific perfection distinguishes this being from individuals of other species. A man, for example, is not a dog because he has a spiritual form, the soul.

Finally, in more recent days, Rosmini (1797-1855) asserts that existence really is responsible for the individual, since it makes it distinct from other beings, and because without it there can be no individual. The answer is clear. Existence actuates the essence in the order of being, but to do so the essence of the individual needs to be intrinsically possible. Now the problem of individuation is precisely this: what is it that makes the individual intrinsically possible?

<sup>13</sup> "*Unaquaeque entitas est per seipsam suae individuationis principium.*" (*Disp. Met., disp. V, sect. 6, No. 1.*)

Many of the great philosophers have held that matter (with many distinctions) is the principle of individuation. Among these we may mention Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, Averroes, Alexander of Hales, S. Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, St. Thomas, etc.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to hear that the doctrine of individuation as explained by St. Thomas was condemned May 7, 1277, by Etienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris. A similar condemnation was promulgated shortly after at the University of Oxford. These condemnations were, of course, later rescinded. The only explanation we can find for them is a failure to understand the true meaning of Thomas' thesis. These good men thought that to say that God cannot multiply individual angels within the same species, because there is no composition of matter in them is a limitation of God's omnipotence. In the tract on the possibles, we have explained that the contrary is true. All that is affirmed is that God cannot make nothing something, since nothing has no order to the "to be."

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SUPPOSIT AND THE PERSON

**The Problem.** The problem of individuation which we have just studied can be expressed thus: What is it that makes a nature an individual? What precisely is the ultimate reason why a specific nature may be multiplied in many individual natures or essences? Now the individual, according to St. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> is "*indistinctum in se*," that is, identical with itself. It is its own self. It is also "*distinctum ab aliis*," distinct from other beings; that is, it is *incommunicable*; it cannot be predicated of another. An individual corporeal nature, as we have explained, cannot be another individual nature, because it has been individuated by this "signate matter." The humanity of Paul, for example, can never be predicated of the nature of Peter.

We now come to another problem which, at first sight, may seem almost the same as that of individuation, but which, as a matter of fact, stands poles apart. It is the problem of the *supposit*. A complete understanding of what the supposit is and the distinction between supposit and the principle of individuation will resolve several difficulties which have led to a misunderstanding of Thomistic philosophy.

In order to understand how this curious question came to be proposed, we must consider certain data of revelation. As philosophers, of course, we are not trying to prove the truth of revelation. That is the work of theologians. But, as Catholic philosophers, we must be influenced, indirectly at least, by what is contained in the deposit of faith, so that we may never try to disprove what is revealed, and directly, in so far as we find in the data of revelation

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *S. Th.*, I, 29, 4.

additional facts which must be explained by our philosophy, albeit inadequately. Now, in the first place, it is of faith, that in God there are three persons and only one nature which is communicated to all three in an ineffable manner. Moreover, we acknowledge as divinely revealed that in Christ there are two natures, human and divine, yet only one divine person. We say that Christ is God and Christ is man, that is, the individual nature of man is predicated of Christ, who is a divine person, and consequently this individual human nature is somehow communicated to and assumed by the divine person. Christ has a human nature; He is man, but He is not a human person. As philosophers, therefore, we conclude that there must be a difference between person (*supposit*) and nature.

Our problem can be expressed thus: What is meant by person and by *supposit*? What is the difference between an individual nature and the *supposit*?

**What Is a *Supposit*?** In the first place we must explain what we understand by *supposit* and person. It is not our intention at present to give a definition, for that will be the result of our search. In a general descriptive way, therefore, we mean by *supposit* a distinct individual thing—an independent subsisting substance; and by person an individual rational nature existing of its own right, and not as part of another. Such a being, as we shall see, is entirely incommunicable, and cannot be assumed by another. Briefly then, what *supposit* signifies regarding a being existing of its own right, *person* affirms of a being subsisting with a rational<sup>1a</sup> nature. Thus any being, this individual tree, this beast, a man—all are said to be *supposits*. The word *hypostasis* is sometimes used in the same sense. On the contrary, only a man, angel, or God can be a person.

**Distinct From Nature.** The question, therefore, is: Is the *supposit* identical with the individual nature, or does the *supposit* add something not contained in the nature?

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<sup>1a</sup> The word rational is sometimes used to indicate intellect in matter as in man, sometimes to designate simply intellect as in God, angel, or man. Here it is taken in the latter sense. (Cf. *S. Th.*, II-II, 83, 10, ad 2m.)



The latter, says St. Thomas. The supposit does add something not contained in the nature. It includes everything, says everything that can be predicated of a being. The nature on the contrary in creatures is distinct from and consequently does not contain its "to be" and its accidents. "These words: person, hypostasis, and supposit designate an integral being."<sup>2</sup> A human supposit "is the entire being that is this man."<sup>3</sup> "The supposit implies that which is most complete."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it takes in the accidents whereas the nature does not. Consequently, the nature is part of the supposit, a part which is designated as the formal part.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, since the "to be" is the highest actuality in the order of being, and the supposit demands the most perfect completeness in that order, it follows that the substantial "to be" by which a being subsists is of the very essence of the supposit. It is not the supposit itself, for the supposit includes the whole being; but we may say that it is its most important factor: for it is that because of which and by which a being attains its highest completion in the order of being, and by which it exists of its own right (it subsists).<sup>6</sup> "The 'to be' is that in which the unity of the supposit is founded."<sup>7</sup> "The 'to be' pertains to the very constitution of person."<sup>8</sup> "Person signifies that which is most perfect in the entire nature, namely, *a being subsisting in a rational nature*."<sup>9</sup> It must include, therefore,

<sup>2</sup> "Haec nomina persona, hypostasis et suppositum, integrum quoddam designant." (Comp. theol., c. 211.)

<sup>3</sup> "hoc totum quod est hic homo." (Ibid.)

<sup>4</sup> "Suppositum importat maximam completionem." (In III Sent., d. 5, q. 3, a. 3.)

<sup>5</sup> "In significatione naturae includitur solum id quod est de ratione speciei; suppositum autem non solum habet haec quae ad rationem speciei pertinent, sed etiam alia quae ei accidunt, et ideo suppositum signatur per totum, natura autem ut pars formalis." (Quodl., II, q. 2, a. 4; Cf. also S. Th., III, 2, 2.) We note the accidents do not constitute the supposit as an *unum per se*, but as an *unum per accidens*. On the contrary the "to be," as we shall see, constitutes the supposit in the order of a perfect unit, *unum per se*.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Arnou, *op. cit.*, p. 144, No. 3.

<sup>7</sup> "Esse est id in quo fundatur unitas suppositi." (Quodl., IX, 3, ad 2m.)

<sup>8</sup> "Esse pertinet ad ipsam constitutionem personae." (S. Th., III, 19, 1, ad 4m.)

<sup>9</sup> "Persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura." (S. Th., I, 29, 3.)

the "to be" which is "the actuality of all acts, and the perfection of all perfections."<sup>10</sup> Indeed the most perfect completion consists precisely in this, that a being has its "to be," which is an analogous participation in the divine "to be."<sup>11</sup>

To repeat then — the individual nature differs from the specific nature in that it adds to the latter the individuating principles (*in actu secundo*); the supposit differs from the individual nature in that it adds the "to be" and the necessary concomitant accidents.

**The Supposit Adds the Proper "To Be" to Individual Nature.** It is, therefore, this substantial "to be" — the very act of *esse* (which "to be" is proportioned and due to each individual nature) — that conjoins with the nature to establish the supposit and render it incommunicable in an absolute sense. Thus the supposit is established by the very act of coming into existence. Let us analyze this last statement. Since the supposit demands perfect completion, and since the highest completion in a being consists precisely in the actuation in the order of being by a "to be" that is proportioned to its individual nature, that is to say, by the proper "to be," it follows that an individual nature with its "to be" will establish a supposit. In other words, the supposit adds to an individual nature its proper "to be." Obviously, then, any nature, by the very fact that it exists of its own right, is a supposit.<sup>12</sup>

**It Is Incommunicable.** The assertion that such a being is incommunicable is equally patent. The supposit is a subsisting indi-

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<sup>10</sup> "*actualitas omnium actuum et perfectio omnium perfectionum.*" (*De Pot.*, VII, 2, ad 9m.)

<sup>11</sup> "*Per hoc . . . aliquid maxime fit actu, quod participat per similitudinem primum et purum actum. Primus autem actus est esse subsistens per se. Unde completionem unumquodque recipit per hoc quod participat esse.*" (*Quodl.*, XII, q. 5, a. 5.)

<sup>12</sup> Every nature or essence is ordered to a "to be" that is proportionate and is called its proper "to be." The individual nature of the dog "Fido" exists by means of a "to be" that is proportionate to this nature. Certainly the nature of a dog could not be actuated by the "to be" of a plant, because not proportionate. It is this proper and proportionate "to be" which causes the being to be incommunicable, which makes it a supposit.

vidual and therefore a perfect unit. But a nature can be communicated or assumed by another only in the case where the union resulting is a perfect unit. Now it is evident that from the composition of two beings that are in act, a perfect unit can never result.<sup>13</sup> To say the opposite is to deny the principle of contradiction. Consequently a *being* may never be communicated or assumed because it already exists in act; a nature, however, may be. More specifically we say that such a being, in so far as it is a supposit — namely, a concrete individual nature with accidents, existing by its own proper “to be” — can never be assumed by a higher supposit, since their union could only be at best an accidental union. On the contrary, we may say that it is not impossible for an individual nature to be assumed by a higher supposit, and to exist, not by its own proper “to be,” but by the “to be” of a higher supposit. We can state then, in theology, that the human nature of Christ is not a human person because it does not exist by its own proper “to be,” but by the divine “to be” of the Word.<sup>14</sup>

**Definition.** Having thus proved that the supposit adds the proper “to be” to an individual nature, we may define *supposit* more exactly. “To the supposit alone are attributed the operations and the natural properties and whatever belongs to the nature in the concrete; for we say that this man reasons, and is risible, and is a rational animal. So likewise this man is said to be a supposit because he underlies (*supponitur*) whatever belongs to man and receives its predication.”<sup>15</sup> The supposit therefore is—in the order

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<sup>13</sup> “*Ex duobus entibus actu non potest fieri unum actu.*” This was explained in the tract on act and potency (p. 27).

<sup>14</sup> “*Natura autem humana Christi, quamvis sit perfecta in linea essentiae, explicatur non esse persona, ex eo quod non habet suum esse proprium, sed existit per esse verbi divini.*” (Arnou, *op. cit.*, p. 146; Cf. also Billot, *De Verbo Incarnato*, p. 136 et seq. Romae, apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, ed. 7.)

<sup>15</sup> “*Tantum hypostasis est cui attribuuntur operationes et proprietates naturae, et ea etiam quae ad naturae rationem pertinent in concreto; dicimus enim quod hic homo ratiocinatur, et est risibilis et est animal rationale. Et hac ratione hic homo dicitur esse suppositum, quia scilicet supponitur his quae ad hominem pertinent, eorum praedicationem recipiens.*” (S. Th., III, 2, 3.)

of intention<sup>16</sup> — that of which all things are predicated, and which is predicated of nothing. For example, I can predicate of the supposit "Peter" that he is a man, white, intelligent, that he exists; but I cannot predicate Peter of John, or of white, or of existence.

St. Thomas defines the supposit as a *subsisting distinct being* in a given nature, *subsistens distinctum in aliqua natura*. Consequently, person is defined as a subsisting distinct being in a rational nature. "This word 'person,'" says St. Thomas, "as it is commonly taken, signifies only an *individual substance of a rational nature*."<sup>17</sup> And because under individual substance of rational nature is contained individual substance, that is, an incommunicable substance, whether it be of God, or angel, or man, it is necessary that a divine person signify a subsisting distinct being in the divine nature, just as a human person signifies a subsisting distinct being in a human nature; and this is the *formal signification* of a person, divine as well as human."<sup>18</sup>

What is the exact meaning of these words, a *distinct being, subsisting in some nature*? It is clear that the word "subsisting" indicates an individual substance in so far as it excludes the possibility of being assumed, because that which subsists in itself, that is, exists by

<sup>16</sup> We do not relegate the supposit to the order of intention, for it is the purpose precisely of this whole treatment to show that the supposit is *the thing* in the real order. This terminology is highly technical and means that we call the existing thing (real order) a supposit (therefore a *nomen intentionis*) when we consider it (intentional order) a subject of all attribution. All this merely means that the supposit is the thing which acts, considered precisely as *the subject of its acts*.

<sup>17</sup> This "individual substance of a rational nature" is the definition of person proposed by Boethius. The word "substance" is taken as abstracting either from first or second substance. The word "individual" then determines the substance to become a first substance in the strictest sense, so that every communicability is excluded. Rational indicates the intellectual nature. (Billot, *op. cit.*, p. 78.)

<sup>18</sup> "*Hoc nomen persona communiter sumptum, nihil aliud significat quam substantiam individuum rationalis naturae. Et quia sub substantia individua rationalis naturae continetur substantia individua, id est incommunicabilis, tam Dei quam hominis, quam etiam angeli, oportet quod persona divina significet subsistens distinctum in natura divina, sicut persona humana significat subsistens distinctum in natura humana, et haec est formalis significatio tam personae divinae quam personae humanae.*" (De Pot., IX, 4.)

its own proper "to be," in so far as it subsists in itself, cannot be assumed by another supposit.

Moreover, when we say "subsisting in a certain nature," we exclude the possibility for this individual nature to be a part, since to subsist in a nature means to possess the nature as a whole and not as a part of another.

Finally, to speak of "distinct" is to exclude all communicability that is contrary to the formal aspect of a supposit, as, for example, in the divine nature which is communicated to the three persons. Indeed, that which subsists distinctly in a certain nature is in no way communicable to other supposits of the same nature.<sup>19</sup>

**Summary.** We may now draw our conclusions. In the first place, we say that the supposit should be defined as a distinct being, subsisting in some nature. For in that definition we have expressed a singular complete substance which exists in itself and is in no way communicable.

Secondly, we say that the supposit is a singular complete substance existing by its own proper "to be." Consequently it adds to the singular complete nature its own proper "to be." By this it is made absolutely incommunicable, for any union with another could result only in an imperfect unit.

This fact, that the proper "to be" is the most important factor in the constitution of the supposit, can be shown also by exclusion. It is clear that the incommunicability of the supposit is not a mere negation, for in a certain sense, it indicates a supreme perfection, since it makes this being be the subject of all predication. Now neither an accident, nor a potential essential principle as matter, nor even the form could suffice to warrant such a perfection, since accident is in the order of activity, matter and form in the order of essence. This perfection of incommunicability, however, is in the order of being. Only by the act of being, by the "to be" that is proper to this nature, can an individual be rendered incommunicable in the order of being.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Billot, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

It is obvious after this discussion that the difference between the question of individuation and that of the supposit lies in this, that in the question of individuation we inquired why this individual was incommunicable in the order of nature, that is, what precisely in the order of specific nature (essence) makes intelligible the multiplication of individuals in the same species. Of course, incommunicability in the order of nature which is had by signate matter is negative since it comes about by limitation. Our present problem has been to discover why a being existing in act is *incommunicable in the order of being*, and our answer has been *because it subsists by means of its proper "to be."* This incommunicability, to be sure, is in the highest sense positive, for it is established not by a potential principle but by *act*.

**Supposit, the Subject of All Acts.** It is important to note that nature which is the principle of motion and, therefore, of action, is the principle *by which* the supposit acts (*principium quo*). The supposit is the principle *which* acts (*principium quod*). The person Peter, for example, is the principle to which all actions must be attributed, while the human nature of Peter is the principle by which Peter acts in a human manner. "To the hypostasis alone," says St. Thomas, "are attributed the operations and the natural properties, and whatever belongs to the nature in the concrete; for we say that this man reasons, and is risible, and is a rational animal."<sup>20</sup> "Actions belong to supposits and belong to wholes and, properly speaking, not to parts and forms and powers, for we do not say properly that the hand strikes, but a man with his hand, nor that heat makes a thing hot, but fire by heat."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Tantum hypostasis est cui attribuuntur operationes et proprietates naturae, et ea quae ad naturae rationem pertinent in concreto; dicimus enim quod hic homo ratiocinatur, et est risibilis et est animal rationale." (S. Th., III, 2, 3.)

<sup>21</sup> "Actiones sunt suppositorum et totorum, non autem proprie loquendo partium et formarum seu potentiarum; non enim proprie dicitur quod manus percutiat, sed homo per manum; neque proprie dicitur quod calor calefaciat sed ignis per calorem." (S. Th., I-II, 58, 2.)

## OPINIONS

The doctrine of St. Thomas regarding the supposit has not been accepted by all the scholastic philosophers. Four other theories have had a certain success. We shall mention them briefly.

**Scotus.** The first of these was proposed by Duns Scotus. He asserts that the supposit adds a double negation to an individual nature. This he discovers by considering the two exceptions when natures are not supposits. The first of these is the human nature of Christ. This nature has *actual* dependence upon the divine Word, the second person of the Blessed Trinity. From this Scotus concludes that the first negation required for the constitution of a supposit is that of actual dependence upon another. The second case of a nature not being a supposit is had with the separated souls, that is, those souls that are no longer united to a body after death. These are not supposits in the strict sense, but only quasi-supposits, for even though they subsist, their individual nature is not complete, since the soul is the form of the body and in its natural state must be united to it. In the state of separation, the soul no longer actually depends (extrinsically) upon the body as it did before death, but it still retains an exigency for it; this is what Scotus calls *aptitudinal* dependence. It follows that the supposit adds a twofold negation of dependence, one actual, the other aptitudinal, to an individual nature.<sup>22</sup>

It is obvious that a twofold negation cannot be said to be the ultimate reason for the perfection which incommunicability supposes. At best these negations could be said to manifest the fact that such a being is a supposit because not communicated. Moreover, every negation supposes something positive. Now in our endeavor to discover the positive fundamental reason for these negations, we find this most positive fact that the supposit is a being subsisting distinctly (from others) in a nature that is complete.

<sup>22</sup> Scotus, III *Sent.*, dist. I, q. 1, nos. 9, et 11, ad 3m.

And consequently we affirm that the supposit adds not a two-fold negation, but the proper "to be" to a complete individual nature.

**Tiphanus.** A theologian of the seventeenth century, Fr. Tiphanius, S.J. († 1641), gave the theory of Scotus a new lease on life, by somewhat modifying its terminology. Realizing the mistake of manifesting a most positive perfection in negative terms, he states that the formal aspect of the supposit is to be entirely in itself, *totum in se*.<sup>23</sup> If, however, one should inquire what the meaning of this phrase might be, Tiphanius would reply that such a being is *totum in se* and therefore a supposit because it has not been assumed by a higher supposit. For by the mere fact that a being is assumed by a higher supposit, even though it retain all it had (such as its proper "to be") as a supposit, it is no longer a supposit.

This opinion is not very interesting, for besides repeating the error of Scotus of founding a perfection upon a negation, it involves the denial of the principle that a perfect unit, *unum per se*, cannot be formed of two perfect units. St. Thomas is extremely categorical in denying this impossibility: "Two beings that are in act are never one in act, but two which are in potency are one in act, as is evident in the part of a 'continuum.' . . . And in this wise Democritus properly said that it is impossible to become one [being] out of two [beings] or out of one to become two. We must understand then that two existing in act can never make one,"<sup>24</sup> and "Two things pertain to [are required for] the formal aspect of the whole, one namely, that the 'to be' of a composite whole

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<sup>23</sup> Claudius Tiphanius, S.J., *Declaratio ac defensio scholastica doctrinae SS. Patrum Doctorisque angelici de hypostasi et persona* (Mussiponti, 1634).

<sup>24</sup> "Duo quae sunt in actu, numquam sunt unum actu; sed duo quae sunt in potentia, sunt unum actu, sicut patet in partibus continui. Duo enim dimidia unius lineae sunt in potentia in ipsa linea dupla, quae est una in actu. . . . Et secundum hunc modum. Democritus recte dixit quod impossibile est, unum fieri ex duobus et ex uno fieri duo. Est enim intelligendum quod duo in actu existentia numquam faciunt unum." (*In VII Met.*, lect. 13.)



pertain to all the parts because the parts do not have a proper 'to be' but exist by the 'to be' of the whole."<sup>25</sup>

**Cajetan.** Quite a different theory is offered by Cajetan, namely, the celebrated theory of the *substantial* mode. According to this view, the formal aspect of person and supposit is a substantial mode which completes the essence in the order of concreteness, so that a nature which is terminated by this mode is a supposit, while one without it is not a supposit. Cajetan admits, however, that a nature which has been assumed by a higher supposit does not exist by its own proper "to be," but is actuated by the "to be" of the higher supposit, as we have explained to be the case of the human nature of Christ. On the contrary, the formal effect of the substantial mode is to make it impossible for such a nature to exist by any other "to be" except its own.<sup>26</sup>

What the nature of this mode is appears difficult to determine. Cajetan affirms that "personality is a *reality* constituting the person. . . . It is a reality that can be reduced to the genus of substance, as for instance the reality 'rational.' Unlike 'rational,' however, it is not a specific difference but it is the last term, and as such a pure term of the nature of a substance."<sup>27</sup> What, then, is this *terminus ultimus* of Cajetan? In the first place, the substantial mode has no causality. It is not, however, a mere figment, but "is like a point at the end of a line."<sup>28</sup> From this we would judge that it adds nothing positive to the nature, for a pure term, a point, is not something positive superadded to the line, but it is the line itself in so far as it terminates. Hence, we are not able to understand how on the one hand this mode can be said to be a

<sup>25</sup> "Ad rationem totius pertinent duo: unum scilicet, quod esse totius compositi pertinet ad omnes partes, quia partes non habent proprium esse, sed sunt per esse totius." (In III Sent., dist. 6, q. 2, a. 3.)

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Maritain, *Distinguer pour unir ou les degrés du savoir*, p. 845 et seq. (Paris: Desclée.)

<sup>27</sup> "Est terminus ultimus, ac ut sic, purus, naturae substantiae." (In III, q. 4, a. 2.)

<sup>28</sup> "Non solum est extra genera causarum extrinsecarum, sed etiam extra causas intrinsecas. . . . Punctum enim est ita terminus lineae." (Loc. cit.)

reality in the order of substance, something most positive since it makes the substance become incommunicable; and at the same time how can it be said to be a pure term like the point of a line which certainly adds nothing positive to the line.

**Suarez.** Finally, Suarez affirms that "subsistence" is a substantial mode. "I understand," he says, "that a being is constituted existing by itself, and altogether incommunicable and therefore as a supposit by a term, that is, a positive mode of a substantial nature."<sup>29</sup> It is not, however, the same kind of mode as that of Cajetan. For unlike Cajetan, Suarez does not admit the real distinction. Consequently, unlike the "personality" of Cajetan, the Suarezian mode follows the "to be" and does not precede it. The difficulty, were one to accept this mode, is very great. Any determination that follows the "to be" can only be an accident, since the substance is already actuated. Now it is impossible to see how an accident could be constitutive of a supposit, since according to Suarez this determination must be in the order of substance, a *substantial mode*.<sup>30</sup>

Having examined these various theories, we conclude that since the supposit is a "being distinctly subsisting in a given nature," it adds to the complete individual nature that nature's proper "to be."

### SCHOLION: The Concept of Person Among Some Modern Philosophers

The profoundly metaphysical explanation which we have proposed as a solution to the problem of personality cannot be accepted

<sup>29</sup> "Suppono in rebus creatis, per eundem omnino terminum seu modum positivum substantialis naturae constitui rem per se existentem et omnino incommunicabilem, et consequenter personam vel suppositum." (*De Incarn.*, disp. XI, sect. 3; cf. etiam *Disp. Meta.*, disp. 34, sect. 4, No. 24.)

<sup>30</sup> Father N. Monaco, S.J., a faithful and modern interpreter of Suarez, remarks that the mode of Suarez does not differ much from the "to be" postulated by St. Thomas. In other words, in this profound question, Suarez seems to have realized the necessity of the real distinction and to have proposed his substantial mode as something of an equivalent. These are the words of Father Monaco: "*Modus substantialis prout a Suarez proponitur non multum differre videtur ab actu essendi, qui iuxta S. Thomam in essentia reali tamquam in potentia subiectiva recipitur.*" (*Praelectiones Metaphysicae Generalis*, p. 253, Prati, 1913.)

by such philosophers as the Empiricists, Subjectivists, Positivists, whose principles are a denial of reality. They will not go beyond the external manifestation of the *ego*, and this they consider to be the very essence of personality. Such theories present little that is of interest, since they explain nothing.

Descartes, whom Locke faithfully followed in this regard, confused consciousness with personality. After them, even to our day, many psychologists have constantly declared that to possess a clear consciousness of self and of one's actions is to be a person. From such an assertion, these authors argue to the multiplication of personalities in the same individual, when on account of some nervous disorder, one is conscious of distinct series of acts, which to the subject appear to belong to different individuals. Clearly these modern psychologists are not speaking of personality at all, but merely of consciousness. The danger of these doctrines lies, of course, in the moral order, since the supposit and not consciousness is the subject of moral acts.

Kant presents the doctrine of person under a more philosophical aspect. In the Kantian theories, *person* is a postulate of practical reason, and is to be defined by the moral universal law. Now according to the philosopher of Koenigsberg, the foundation of morality, being established by a categorical imperative, an act of the will, consequently, is not necessarily established on the real, but is merely a subjective act.

Such subjectivism is clearly against the evidence of common sense which constantly asserts that person is neither an act, nor a faculty, nor consciousness, nor even an expression of a subjective moral law, but a rational being existing in its own right. We are responsible for our actions, says St. Thomas, because actions belong to the supposit. To deny this is to destroy all responsibility, and to promote a system of immorality which can terminate only in the glorification of the *ego* and of the State.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCERNING ACCIDENTS IN GENERAL<sup>1</sup>

#### FIRST QUESTION: What Is a Predicamental Accident?

**Why Accidents?** We have said a great deal already about predicamental accidents. In the third question of the second chapter of the first part (page 70 et seq.), after discussing the structure of being in the order of activity, we discovered the composition of act and potency called substance and accidents, thereby establishing their existence, together with the real distinction between them. At the beginning of this last section on the predicaments, we offered the division of Aristotelian categories, that is, substance and the nine supreme classes (genera) of accidents. We shall now institute a more exhaustive search into the nature of accidents, that we may by a more exact definition better understand their objective reality.

**Definition.** It is hardly necessary to recall the distinction between logical and metaphysical (real, predicamental) accident. This has been explained in diverse places before. We are dealing, of course, with the real, not with the intentional order. What, we ask, is the definition of predicamental accident? St. Thomas says:

To exist by self [*per se*] is not [strictly speaking] a definition of substance; because by this we do not manifest its quiddity, but its "to be," and in a creature its quiddity is not its "to be"; otherwise, substance could not be a genus, because the "to be" cannot be common by way of genus, since each of those contained under a genus differ in their "to be"; but the definition or the quasi-definition of substance is a thing having quiddity, to which is acquired, or due a "to be," as not in another; and likewise to be in a subject is not the definition of accident, but on the contrary [accident is] a thing

<sup>1</sup> The sixth chapter of the translation by Claire Riedl of the *De Ente et Essentia* should be read. (*On Being and Essence*, Toronto: St. Michael College.)

to which is due a "to be" in another; and this is never separated from any accident, nor can it ever be separated; because to that thing which is an accident it is always due according to its quiddity to be in another.<sup>1a</sup>

Our definition of accident then shall be: *a being to the quiddity of which is due "to be" in another as in a subject.*

**Accident Is a Form.** The reason for adding the "as in a subject" is that we may the better understand the mode of being of an accident. The essence of an accident is a form; it has no matter, but it must inhere in a subject. Hence its mode of being is quite different from that of the substantial form which gives matter the first or substantial "to be." The accidental form, on the contrary, also gives a "to be," but it is only a *second* "to be" to the subject already constituted in the order of substance. Let us consider the following important lines from Thomas.

The subject can be compared with the accident in three different ways: The first is that the subject is as one giving support to the accident; for the accident does not subsist by itself, but is propped up by the subject. Secondly the subject may be compared to accident as potency to act, for the subject is subjected to the accident, as a potency to an act; and that is why the accident is called a form. The third way is as cause to the effect, for the principles of the subject are the principles of proper accidents.<sup>2</sup>

**Definition of Accident Includes Subject.** It is clear from this

<sup>1a</sup> "Per se existere non est definitio substantiae: quia per hoc non demonstratur quidditas eius, sed eius esse; et sua quidditas non est suum esse; alias non posset esse genus: quia esse non potest esse commune per modum generis, cum singula contenta in genere differant secundum esse; sed definitio, vel quasi definitio substantiae est res habens quidditatem, cui acquiritur esse, vel debetur, ut non in alio; et similiter esse in subiecto non est definitio accidentis, sed e contrario res cui debetur esse in alio; et hoc numquam separatur ab aliquo accidente, nec separari potest: quia illi rei quae est accidens, secundum rationem suae quidditatis semper debetur esse in alio." (In IV Sent., Dist. XII, q. 1, a. 1.)

<sup>2</sup> "Subiectum tripliciter comparatur ad accidens. Uno modo sicut praebens ei sustentamentum: nam accidens per se non subsistit, fulcitur vero per subiectum. Alio modo sicut potentia ad actum: nam subiectum accidenti subiicitur, sicut quaedam potentia actui, unde et accidens forma dicitur. Tercio modo sicut causa ad effectum: nam principia subiecti sunt principia per se accidentis." (Questio Un. De Virt., in Com., a. 3.)

that the nature of an accident is to demand inherence in another. It is also obvious that since the accident needs to be supported by the substance the essence of an accident is very imperfect.<sup>3</sup> Indeed the accident is rather as something belonging to being than simply being.<sup>4</sup> It cannot be said to "become" or to be corrupted; rather it is the subject that is becoming by means of this or that accident.<sup>5</sup> And that is the reason why an accident cannot be defined without the subject as a quasi-part of the definition.<sup>6</sup> St. Thomas explains:

No matter how we take an accident, its very notion implies dependence on a subject but in different ways. For if we take an accident in the abstract, it implies relation to a subject, which relation begins in the accident and terminates in the subject: for whiteness is that whereby a thing is white. Accordingly, in defining an accident in the abstract, we do not put the subject as though it were the first part of the definition, viz., the genus; but we give it the second place which is that of the difference: thus we say snubnosedness is a curvature of the nose. But if we take accidents in the concrete, the relation begins in the subject and terminates at the accident: for a white thing is something that has whiteness. Accordingly, in defining this kind of accident, we place the subject as the genus, which is the first part of the definition; for we say that a snubnose is a curved nose.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Ratio accidentis imperfectionem continet, quia esse accidentis est inesse et dependere et compositionem facere cum subiecto." (In I Sent., VIII, 4, 3.)

<sup>4</sup> "Non dicitur ens, quasi ipsum esse habeat, sed quia eo aliquid est; unde et magis dicitur esse entis." (S. Th., I-II, 110, 2 ad 3.)

<sup>5</sup> "Proprie loquendo nullum accidens neque fit, neque corrumpitur; sed dicitur fieri et corrumpi, secundum quod subiectum incipit vel desinit esse in actu secundum illud accidens." (Loc. cit.)

<sup>6</sup> "Non possunt definiri nisi ponatur subiectum in eorum definitione." (De Ente et Essentia, c. 7.)

<sup>7</sup> "Dicendum, quod quocumque modo significetur accidens, habet dependentiam a subiecto secundum suam rationem; aliter tamen et aliter. Nam accidens significatum in abstracto importat habitudinem ad subiectum; nam albedo dicitur qua aliquid est album. Et ideo in definitione accidentis abstracti non ponitur subiectum quasi prima pars definitionis, quae est genus, sed quasi secunda, quae est differentia; dicimus enim quod simitas est curvitas nasi. Sed in concretis incipit habitudo a subiecto, et terminatur ad accidens; dicitur enim album quod habet albedinem. Propter quod in definitione huiusmodi accidentis ponitur subiectum tamquam genus, quod est prima pars definitionis; dicimus enim quod simum est nasus curvus." (S. Th., I-II, 53, 2, ad 3m.)

**Accidents Have Their Own "To Be."** Nevertheless, accidents have their own distinct "to be"<sup>8</sup> proportionate to the essence which is a form.<sup>9</sup> This accidental "to be," however, is peculiar. Unlike the first "to be" which actuates the substantial essence and makes it be absolutely (*simpliciter*), the "to be" of an accident is to actuate the accidental form in a subject, so that in a true sense we do not say that the accident is, but that by it the substance is *such*.<sup>10</sup>

**Individuation of Accidents.** For this reason, with the exception of quantity which receives its individuation from the order of parts (*situs*), the accidents are individuated by the substance. Consequently, the multiplicity of the accidental "to be" in a subject in no way impedes the perfect unity of the supposit.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, we should like to quote a capital text from the opusculum called *De Principiis Naturae* which summarizes all that has been said by explaining the differences between matter and subject; substantial and accidental form; the first and second "to be."

Strictly speaking, that which is in potency to the substantial "to be" is called prime matter, while what is in potency to the accidental "to be" is called the subject. For the subject gives the "to be" to the accident, since the accident has no "to be" except by the subject. Hence we say that accidents are *in* a subject, and do not say that the substantial form is in a subject. Thus matter differs from subject, in that a subject is that which does not have its "to be" from the fact that something is added to it, but is that which is of

<sup>8</sup> Cardinal Mercier and a few other philosophers thought that the accidents did not have their own distinct "to be," but existed by the substantial "to be." This doctrine, besides implying that the composite of substance and accident is a perfect unit *unum per se*, would make it impossible to explain accidental change.

<sup>9</sup> "*Cum accidentia habeant esse et essentias proprias, et eorum essentia non sit eorum esse, constat quod aliud est in eis esse et quod est, et ita habent compositionem.*" (In IV Sent., d. XII, a. 1, sol. 1, ad 5.)

<sup>10</sup> "*Non quod ipsa (accidentia) habeant esse, sed quia eis aliquid est.*" (S. Th., I-II, 55, 4, ad 1m.)

<sup>11</sup> "*Illud esse quod pertinet ad ipsam hypostasim vel personam secundum se, impossibile est in una persona vel hypostasi multiplicari: quia impossibile est quod unus rei non sit unum esse. . . . Esse album est esse Socratis non in quantum est Socrates, sed in quantum est albus; et huiusmodi esse nihil prohibet multiplicari in una hypostasi vel persona.*" (S. Th., III, 17, 2.)

itself, and has a complete "to be." Thus a man does not have his "to be" through whiteness. On the other hand, matter is that which has its "to be" from the fact that something is added [comes] to it, since of itself it has only an incomplete "to be," or rather no "to be" at all.<sup>12</sup>

## SECOND QUESTION: Could Any Accidents, by Divine Power, Exist Separated From Substance?

**Occasion.** To Catholic philosophers, the reason for this question is obvious. It arises, of course, because of the dogma of Transubstantiation. In the sacrament of Holy Eucharist, we believe that the "species" or, as they are generally interpreted, the accidents of bread and wine remain after the substance of bread and wine has been changed into the body and blood of Christ. It is, then, possible for an accident to exist without actually inhering in a substance. But to say that might appear to be a denial of what the essence of an accident stands for, namely a being that inheres in another (*ens in alio*).

**Problem.** From a purely philosophical point of view, the problem might be put thus: In the definition of accident, namely, that to whose quiddity is due a "to be" in another as in a subject, does the phrase "to be in another as in subject" indicate necessarily *actual* or merely *aptitudinal* inherence in a subject? It is clear that those philosophers who do not enjoy the guidance of revelation will probably answer as did Aristotle,<sup>13</sup> the actual inherence is of the

<sup>12</sup> "Proprie loquendo illud quod est in potentia ad esse substantiale dicitur materia prima; quod autem est in potentia ad esse accidentale dicitur subiectum; subiectum enim dat esse accidenti, quia accidens non habet esse nisi per subiectum, unde dicitur quod accidentia sunt in subiecto, non autem dicitur quod forma substantialis sit in subiecto. Et secundum hoc differt materia a subiecto, quia subiectum est quod non habet esse ex eo quod aliquid ei advenit, sed quod est per se, et habet esse completum, ut homo non habet esse per albedinem; sed materia dicitur quod habet esse ex eo quod sibi advenit, quia de se esse incompletum, imo nullum esse habet." (*De Principiis Naturae*, in princ.)

<sup>13</sup> "By 'present in a subject' I do not mean present as parts are present in a whole, but 'incapable of existence apart from the said subject.'" (*Categories*, c. 2.)



essence of the accident. On the contrary, Scotus<sup>14</sup> denies that an accident need have any inherence, actual or aptitudinal. The truth of the matter lies between these two extreme opinions. Not actual, but aptitudinal inherence alone must be admitted to be of the essence of an accident.

**A Negative Question.** The problem as we face it in philosophy is purely negative and speculative. We do not intend to show that *de facto* accidents do exist without inhering in a substance. Nor do we say that all accidents can by divine power exist without actual inherence; a vital act, for example, since it is immanent, that is, terminating within the subject, does not appear possible without actual inherence in a living subject. All that we aim to prove is that there is no contradiction in saying that it is not impossible for certain accidents, not actually inhering in the substance, to exist by divine power.

**Proof.** And this is easily proved; for any impossibility about such a state of existence must come from one of three reasons:

- 1) that accidents are not really distinct from substance;
  - 2) that the nature of an accident requires a constant influx from the substance;
  - 3) that the definition of an accident demands actual inherence.
- Now none of these reasons is valid.

1. With regard to the first, we have shown that accident and substance are really distinct as act and potency.

2. As for the second, we should note that the influx which flows from the substance into the accident is twofold: on the one hand, we speak of this influx in the order of the material cause, in so far as an accident is educed from the potency of the subject, and in regard to the inter-communication of their respective reality. On the other hand, we may consider this influx in the order of the efficient cause in so far as the accident receives support. Now, while God cannot be a material cause (for this implies imperfection). He is the supreme efficient cause, and consequently can supply the nec-

<sup>14</sup> In IV Sent., S. II, q. 1.

essary influx in the order of efficiency for the existence of an accident separated from the substance.

3. The third alleged reason can easily be shown to be invalid. The definition of an accident is indeed a being to whose quiddity is due a "to be" in another as in a subject. It is evident, however, that this definition can be rightly applied to an accident that exists separated from substance, since the accident still retains its aptitudinal adherence, that is, still retains its order "to be in another," its exigency to inhere in a subject. In other words, the "to be" in another is still its due.

**Doctrine of St. Thomas.** This doctrine is clearly established by St. Thomas in the *Summa Theologica* in the treatise on the Eucharist.

Since an effect depends more upon the first cause than on the second, God who is the first cause both of substance and accident, can by his unlimited power preserve an accident in existence when the substance is withdrawn whereby it was preserved in existence as by its proper cause, just as without natural causes He can produce other effects of natural (efficient) causes.<sup>15</sup>

The definition of accident is not "to be in a subject"; but it belongs to the quiddity or essence of accident *to have "to be" in a subject*. But in this sacrament (of the Eucharist) it is not by virtue of their essence that accidents are not in a subject, but through the divine power sustaining them; and consequently they do not cease to be accidents, because neither is the definition of accident withdrawn from them, nor does the definition of substance apply to them.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Cum effectus magis dependeat a causa prima, quam a causa secunda, Deus, qui est prima causa substantiae et accidentis, per suam infinitam virtutem conservare potest in esse accidentis, subtracta substantia per quam conservabatur in esse sicut per propriam causam; sicut etiam alios effectus naturalium causarum potest producere sine naturalibus causis." (S. Th., III, 77, 1.)

<sup>16</sup> "Non est definitio accidentis esse in subiecto; sed quidditati autem, sive essentiae accidentis competit habere esse in subiecto. In hoc autem sacramento non datur accidentibus quod ex vi suae essentiae non sit in subiecto, sed ex divina virtute sustentante; et ideo non desinunt esse accidentia, quia nec separatur ab eis definitio accidentis, nec competit eis definitio substantiae." (Ibid., ad 2m.)

Moreover, as to their individuation in the state of separation, St. Thomas explains: "These accidents acquired individual 'to be' in the substance of the bread and wine; and when this substance is changed into the body and blood of Christ by divine power, they remain in that individuated 'to be' which they possessed before, hence they are individual and sensible."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "*Huiusmodi accidentia acquisierunt esse individuum in substantia panis et vini qua conversa in corpus et sanguinem Christi, remanent virtute divina accidentia in illo esse individuato quod prius habebant, unde sunt singularia et sensibilia.*" (*Ibid.*, ad 3m.)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ON RELATIONS

#### WHETHER RELATIONS ARE REALITIES

**Why Relations?** In the prologue of this treatise on predicaments, we gave a long description of the different classes (genera) of accidents. It would take another volume to make a serious study of all these. Moreover, some of them like "action" and "passion" have been explained in the tract on efficient causality; others like quantity, quality—especially the question of (intellectual) habits—will be seen in the philosophy of nature (cosmology), and in the philosophy of man (psychology). There is one of these accidental predicaments, however, which because of its profoundly metaphysical nature, calls for a special treatment in the philosophy of being. That is the "relation." The concept of "relation" enters into every part of philosophy, and most of all into Metaphysics. Indeed what else have we been establishing since the beginning of the course except relations between act and potency, relation between reality and our knowledge, relation between cause and effect, between substance and accident? For this reason we shall fittingly end our metaphysical discussions with this important and beautiful question, a question which is not only of the greatest necessity in philosophy, but is basic in the fundamental dogma of our faith, the dogma of the Trinity.

**Definition.** The word "relation" immediately brings to our mind the idea of connection, "nexus" between two or more objects. It signifies some sort of interdependence, some sort of order between

beings. "Those things are called relative," says Aristotle, "which being either said to be of something else or related to something else are explained by reference to that other thing."<sup>1</sup> What, then, is there proper to relation that makes it different from any other being? It is precisely this order to other things which constitutes relation. "*τὸ πρὸς τι*" are Aristotle's words, and St. Thomas repeats them with the expression *ad aliquid* and *esse ad*. In defining relation in terms of being, then, we can say it is that whose "to be" is to *be ordered to another*, or more briefly a being whose very essence is reference to another, or simply "to another."

To apprehend such a being is clearly not within the scope of the senses. At best the senses can merely experience a being *that is* related to another, but the relation as such is the object of the intellect which alone can know being and its principles. For, "even though the sensible faculties are able to know things absolutely, nevertheless to know the order of a thing to another pertains only to the intellect or to reason."<sup>2</sup>

**Transcendental Relation.** On different occasions we spoke of *transcendental* relations which we established between act and potency. Here we are dealing principally with *predicamental* relation, and it is essential to distinguish clearly between these two kinds of relations. The transcendental relation is not, like the predicamental, an accidental modification of the substance. It consists in the order that act and potency have for each other. It is distinct from neither act nor potency but embraces both. The act and the potency are called the *relata*—that is, the related principles of being. The transcendental relation itself is the *relata* as ordered to each other. As a transcendental it is not, therefore, like the predicamental relation limited to be only an accident, but transcends the diverse genera of beings. We have seen throughout our course transcendental relations between essence and "to be,"

<sup>1</sup> *Categories*, chapter VII. The student would do well to read that entire chapter of the *Categories*.

<sup>2</sup> "Etsi vires sensitivae cognoscant res aliquas absolute, ordinem tamen unius rei ad aliam cognoscere est solius intellectus aut rationis." (*In I Ethic.*, I.)

between substance and accident, between matter and form. Take the last; the relation between matter and form is a transcendental relation. It is not something distinct from the matter and the form, it is the matter and the form in so far as they are mutually ordered to each other. This exigency of one for the other which the very entity of each principle, act and potency, imports we call a transcendental relation. We see, therefore, that it is extremely real — indeed nothing could be more real, but it is not really distinct from the *relata*.

**The Predicamental Relation**, on the contrary, is an accident, a new entity, a reality outside the mind, for the reason that an accident must inhere in the substance. Since it is a relation, in so far as it designates to another, it somehow reaches the term of its reference. Let us not try to imagine such a being, for, as we have remarked, neither external sense nor imagination can know relation. Indeed, this "imagining" has been the source of many of the vicissitudes which the concept of predicamental relation has undergone. Some of the philosophers of the past four centuries could only laugh at those innumerable little beings of the earlier scholastics (*entitulae*, they called them), which seemed to be flying around at a terrific speed, and which were so elastic as to stretch indefinitely. Such, for example, they said would be the elasticity of the relation between father and son, as soon as the father or the son would move away from the other.<sup>3</sup>

Now nothing could be more remote from the true concept of relation. Predicamental relation is not a being, but a principle of being. It is an *ens quo*. It is not a complete physical being. Thomas calls it the *debilissimum ens*, the weakest of them all.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, so

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<sup>3</sup> Today it is interesting to note that in the world of physics, we find that electric waves travel at unimaginable speed, that their number is beyond comprehension. And while in no way admitting a comparison in the strict sense between such physical entities and predicamental relation which is only a principle of being, it is amusing to realize that one of the greatest difficulties proposed against the reality of relation by physico-philosophers of a past age has absolutely no meaning in a world of atoms and electrons.

<sup>4</sup> "*Quia relatio est debilioris esse inter predicamenta, ideo putaverunt quidam eam esse ex secundis intellectibus . . . hoc autem esse non potest.*" (*De Pot.*, VII, 9.)

weak is it that even though inhering in its subject as all accidents must, the least trouble in the term of the relation, even though thousands of miles away, may bring about a complete destruction of the relation. Why such an instantaneous communication between two beings that are at some distance from each other should cause any difficulty we fail to see; especially since we know from modern physics that every tiny motion has its repercussion *ad infinitum*. If this be possible in the realm of phenomena, how much easier it should be in the order of being and of its principles.

It should be observed that while a predicamental relation ceases to exist once its term is destroyed, the same cannot be said of a transcendental relation. We have an excellent example in the soul of man which, even after the separation from the body in death, retains its exigency for or its order (*habitus*) to the body. Another apt example is had in matter which even when united with a substantial form still retains its desire, its hunger for all other possible material forms.

**Relation Abstracts From Imperfection.** Two further points should be borne in mind with regard to relations. The first is that the concept of relation in itself, by which we mean relation as abstracted from predicamental or transcendental, in no way designates an accident, for the "to another" is not indicative of inherence. In itself, therefore, the concept of relation abstracts from all imperfection, and that is why we are able to speak of divine relations, which are not accidents but subsisting relations.<sup>5</sup>

**Relation Abstracts From the "To Be."** Secondly, it should be noted that just as the concept of relation abstracts from all imperfections, so does it abstract from the "to be" of the real order. Consequently, not only are there real relations, whether predicamental

<sup>5</sup> "But if we consider the essential elements of whatsoever genus, each and every other genus except 'to another' (relation) connotes imperfection. . . . And consequently there remain only two modes of predicating of God; that of substance and that of relation." "*Si autem consideremus propriam rationem cuiuslibet generis, quodlibet aliorum generum praeter 'ad aliquid,' importat imperfectionem. . . . Et propter hoc tantum remanent duo modi praedicandi in divinis, scilicet secundum substantiam et secundum relationem.*" (In I Sent., d. 8, q. 4, a. 3.)

or transcendental, but also relations of reason, which exist only in the mind, as we explained when speaking of beings of reason (page 113).<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, then, not only must we distinguish between transcendental and predicamental relation, but also between real and logical.<sup>7</sup> We are concerned here only with the real predicamental relation.

**Subject, Term, Foundation.** In such a relation we must distinguish between the *subject* or that which is related; the *term* to which the subject is related, and the *foundation* for the relation, namely that because of which the subject is related to the term.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "It must be noted that only in those accidents which signify 'to another' (relation) are found some according to the mind (logical relation) only and not according to reality." "*Considerandum est quod solum in his quae dicuntur 'ad aliquid' inveniuntur aliqua secundum rationem tantum, et non secundum rem. Quod non est in aliis generibus.*" (S. Th., I, 28, 1.)

"In this differs 'to another' (relation) from the other genera; for these others posit from their very nature that they are something real, as for instance quantity posits something, as is likewise true of the others. But 'relation' does not have as its own *raison d'être* the positing of something. Hence there are found certain types of relation which do not exist in the things of nature but only in the intellect, which does not happen in the other genera." "*In hoc differt 'ad aliquid' ab aliis generibus, quod alia genera ex propria sui ratione habent quod aliquid sint, sicut quantitas aliquid ponit, et similiter est de aliis. Sed 'ad aliquid' ex propria sui generis ratione non habet quod ponat aliquid; unde inveniuntur quaedam 'ad aliquid' quae nihil sunt in rerum natura, sed in ratione tantum, quod in aliis generibus non contingit.*" (Quodl., IX, a. 4.)

<sup>7</sup> "It is necessary to know that since relation has two extremes, it happens in three ways that a relation is real or logical." (S. Th., I, 13, 7.) The student would do well to read this important article.

<sup>8</sup> St. Thomas following Aristotle establishes three and only three possible foundations for all predicamental relations: Quantity (order of material cause), action and passion (order of efficiency), the reason for mensuration (order of the exemplar). "One thing can be ordered to another," explains St. Thomas, "either in regard to its 'to be' in so far as the 'to be' of a thing depends upon another and this is the third mode. Or according to active and passive potency, in so far as one thing gives to or receives from another, and this is the second mode. Or finally in so far as the quantity of a thing can be measured by another, and this is the first mode." "*Ordinatur autem una res ad aliam, vel secundum esse, prout esse unius rei dependet ab alia, et sic est tertius modus. Vel secundum virtutem activam et passivam, secundum quod una res ab alia recipit, vel alteri confert aliquid; et sic est secundus modus. Vel secundum quod quantitas unius rei potest mensurari per aliam, et sic est primus modus.*" (In V Met., lect. 17, No. 1004.)



A predicamental relation, therefore, in terms of subject, term, and foundation, may be thus described: It is *the reference which the subject has to the term because of the foundation*.

**A Real Relation Is Really Distinct From the Subject, From the Term, and From the Foundation.** It is evident that the subject must be really distinct from the term, otherwise the relation could not be real, for no one can be really related to his own identical self. It is also obvious that the relation itself must be really distinct from the subject, otherwise the relation would be only a being of reason, since the subject may often exist before the advent of the relation. Peter was man before he became father. Thus St. Thomas affirms, "in creatures paternity adds a new 'to be' that is accidental and not the same as the 'to be' of the subject."<sup>9</sup>

We must assert also that the relation is distinct from its term. The reason is plain: as an accident it should inhere in the subject. The latter, however, as we have explained, is distinct from the term. Hence the relation cannot be said to be identical with the term, but is really distinct from it.

The fact that the relation must also be distinct from its foundation has not been accepted by many philosophers who feared these multitudes of little beings flying about. But it is evident that to say the relation is identified with its foundation is to deny real relation, since the foundation, by priority of nature at least, is not a relation and does not signify "to another," but another predicament, such as quantity, or action. Now if no real modification is had with the advent of the relation, this latter could only be a being of the mind. Consequently, either there are no real relations, or predicamental relations are really distinct from their foundation.

**Real Relations Exist.** But obviously *there are real predicamental relations*; for there exists a real order of cause and effect, of equality and proportion between all beings in the universe. But this real

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<sup>9</sup> "In creaturis per paternitatem additur novum esse, quod est esse accidentale et non idem quod est esse subiecti." (In I Sent., XXI, q. 1, a. 2.)

order is nothing else than a complexus of relations. Hence to acknowledge this order is to acknowledge real relations.

Perfection and good which are things outside the mind are not only considered as something inhering absolutely in things, but also according to the order of one thing to another. There must be, therefore, in the things themselves a certain order, and this order is a relation. Whence it is necessary that there be in the things themselves certain relations, according to which one is referred to the other.<sup>10</sup>

The same assertion may be made evident from the fact that relation is numbered among the predicaments. Now a predicament, as we saw, is a reality which has a mode of being distinct from any other. This we know from the fact of predication. Now a relation is a reality whose "to be" is to have itself in regard to another. And this is in no way expressed by any other predicament.

"In every predicament is posited a being existing outside of the mind; for we distinguish between a being of reason and being which is subdivided into ten predicaments. If, then, relation was not a thing outside the mind, we would not place 'to another' as one of the genera of the predicaments."<sup>11</sup>

## OPINIONS

St. Thomas speaks of "certain philosophers who say that relation is not a genus of being, nor anything in the world of nature, but it is rather a kind of respect scattered through all beings. They hold that relations belong to second intentions, and hence have

<sup>10</sup> "Perfectio et bonum quae sunt in rebus extra animam, non solum attenduntur secundum aliquid absolute inherens rebus, sed etiam secundum ordinem unius rei ad aliam. . . . Oportet ergo in ipsis rebus ordinem quemdam esse: hic autem ordo relatio quaedam est. Unde oportet in rebus ipsis relationes quasdam esse, secundum quas unum ad alterum ordinatur. . . . Oportet quod res habentes ordinem ad aliquid realiter referantur ad ipsum et quod in eis aliqua res sit relatio." (De Pot., VIII, 9.)

<sup>11</sup> "In nullo enim predicamento ponitur aliquid, nisi res extra animam existens; nam ens rationis dividitur contra ens divisum per decem predicamenta. Si autem relatio non esset in rebus extra animam, non poneretur ad aliquid unum genus predicamenti." (De Pot., VII, 9.)

no 'to be' except in the mind."<sup>12</sup> Accordingly the reference of one thing to another would be only a being of the mind. Many have been the philosophers both before and after the time of St. Thomas who have taught this doctrine, thereby destroying all real relations, and logically all reality, though most of them would scarcely admit the necessity of this conclusion. Still, to give only an example, if one were to deny the reality of the relation between cause and effect, he should logically say (and some of these philosophers do say it at least implicitly) that our dependence upon God the supreme cause is not real, and that the order of the world is not real, since the relation is only in the mind. The Stoics, Avicenna, Averroes, Occam, and in general all Nominalists, and of course the Positivists, like Hume, head the list of those who deny real relation. Moreover, the unity of the aprioristic form of Kant is a purely subjective and cannot be considered as an objective reality.

Most scholastics accept and teach the objectivity of relation. A few, however, would have the term as a constitutive part of the relation. Among these we may mention Cardinal Franzelin, Schiffrini, Palmieri. Some, while affirming the reality of the relation, deny that it is really distinct from its foundation. The more important names among those holding this view are: Henry of Ghent and Francis Suarez.<sup>13</sup>

We have already explained the doctrine of the Angelic Doctor, who constantly insists that the real relation to be real must be distinct from the foundation.

Finally, we note that the modern Idealists, while affirming the reality of relation, place it as well as all other reality in the thought itself.

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<sup>12</sup> "*Quidam philosophi dixerunt quod relatio non est aliquod unum genus entium, nec est aliquid in rerum natura; sed est quidam respectus repertus in omnibus entibus; et quod relationes sunt de intentionibus secundis, quae non habent esse nisi in anima.*" (In I Sent., d. 26, q. 2, a. 1.)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Disp. Met.*, 47, sect. 2, Nos. 12, 22.

**CONCLUSION**

In the end of our search, we should like to recall briefly the more important stages through which our study of "being" has taken us. Confronted in the beginning with the problem of "the one and the many," of difference, and of "becoming," we have, by means of the doctrine of act and potency, arrived at a profound understanding of the structure of all beings, whether Pure Act or a more or less complex composite of act and potency.

This composition, having been established by the limitation of act by potency, and having been discovered in the three orders of reality, opened in turn other fundamental problems, namely, that of the real distinction, the theory of matter and form, the question of substance and accident. The first of these established the absolute difference between God and creatures, the second terminated with the difficult question of individuation. The third brought a consideration of the predicaments, together with other kindred problems, such as the supposit and personality.

Beginning with the senses, and rising to the highest abstraction of the intellect, we were finally enabled to account for the unity and multiplicity of "being" because of the analogy of proportionality by means of which our intellect faintly perceives the true meaning of limited beings participating in THE BEING THAT IS.

Finally, having meditated upon the limitation of finite being by an analysis of its composition, we rose to the affirmation of the supreme efficient cause, who is the ultimate end, and the source of all

*Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.*

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